Minutes by Jane Walker

Steering Committee representatives attending:
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB) – Stacey Moulds
Clean Virginia Waterways (CVW) – Katie Register
County of Henrico – Robin Wilder
James River Association – Chuck Fredrickson
United States Geological Society (USGS) – Karen Rice
Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) – Matt Ellinghaus
Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies (VAMWA) – Marvin Booth
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) – Len Smock
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) – Darryl Glover
Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) – Sam Austin
Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Michele Monti
Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) – Lyle Varnell
Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC) – Jane Walker
Virginia Water Well Association (VWWA) – Jane Cain

Organizations without a representative at the meeting:
American Water Works Association (AWWA- Virginia section)
Citizens for Water Quality
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III
Virginia Agribusiness Council (VAC)
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)
Virginia Foundation of Independent Colleges (VFIC)

Committee Chairs attending:
Operations – Sam Austin, DOF
Coordination and Education Task Force – Marvin Booth, City of Bedford (VAMWA)
Finance Task Force – Katie Register, Clean Virginia Waterways

The Virginia Water Monitoring Council (VWMC) Steering Committee met March 17, 2004 (12:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.) at the Department of Forestry Building in Charlottesville, Virginia. Michele Monti, Steering Committee Chair, led the meeting.

Each attendee introduced himself or herself. The meeting agenda was approved, with the addition of Department of Environmental Quality Updates after Committee Reports. The
minutes from the January 14, 2004 meeting were reviewed and approved with minor corrections made by those attending the meeting.

Financial Report:
Jane Walker reported that the VWMC is able to accept donations through an account with the Virginia Tech Foundation and that a contribution was made to the VWMC through this account. She also explained that the Foundation uses 7% of the contribution for its overhead. Jane reported that as of March 16, 2004, the VWMC has a financial deficit of $2,859.

Old Business:

VWMC display at Surf and Turf Education Event
The VWMC had a display at the Surf and Turf Education Event (formerly known as Chesapeake Bay Days) at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond on March 6-7th. Katie Register and Don Smith staffed the display and answered questions that people had about the VWMC. Katie stressed the need to have brochures with the display for such events and suggested that animals such as frogs and fish are a good way to get the attention of children. The VWMC is invited to participate in this event again next year.

VWMC Role in Quality Assurance Project Planning (QAPP)
At the January meeting, Lyle Varnell requested as a first step in considering QAPP reviews by the VWMC to have a document from DEQ and DCR telling the VWMC where the agencies stand on this issue. In an email sent to the Steering Committee in February, Darryl Glover explained that Joyce Brooks, DEQ’s Citizen Monitoring Coordinator, is resigning. Because the Citizen Monitoring Coordinator position is essential to DEQ's participation in any QAPP review process, he requested to wait on the submittal of a letter until a new Citizen Monitoring Coordinator is hired.

Michele Monti explained that she attended a three-day, intensive QAPP training in January. She spoke with the person who lead the training and asked if she could lead a one-day, general QAPP training. Michele learned that the consultant could lead such a training session after August and would charge $2,500 plus expenses to do so. Michele asked if the VWMC was interested in sponsoring such a training session.

A discussion followed, with the concerns raised that QAPP approvals by the VWMC might send a message that the VWMC is endorsing the monitoring program of a particular group and that their data is therefore of high quality and more credible, even if this is not the case. The concern was raised that citizen monitors might think that QAPP approval by the VWMC means that their local government must use their data. It was suggested that language would need to be developed so that citizen monitors would understand the limits of the QAPP approval.

The discussion concluded with consensus that QAPP training is needed and that sponsorship of this training would be an appropriate role for the VWMC. Funds would need to be raised, and could perhaps be raised by the training participants. The possible development of a QAPP training session is to be a responsibility of the Coordination and Education Committee. It was suggested that Stacey Brown, Matt Ellinghaus, Stacey Moulds, and Robin Wilder meet to discuss improving the relationships between citizen monitors and users of data, such as local governments.
Election of VWMC Steering Committee members (2004-2007 term)
David Buckalew, Longwood University – carried unanimously

Response of data requests
Jane Walker reported that she sent the VWMC membership three separate requests for data: 1.) Participation in the VWMC Inventory, 2.) Participation in the compendium of Ecological Assessment Methods, and 3.) Data needed by the Academic Advisory Committee (ACC) looking into nutrient criteria. Jane reported that Joanna Cornell expressed appreciation for getting the word out about their survey of existing, newly developed, or draft methods for assessing wetlands, stream/riparian areas, and uplands and hoped this would help increase the participation in survey. Len Smock stated that the AAC had only received one response from the announcement. Stacey Moulds offered to send data from the ACB to him.

New Business:

2004 VWMC Conference
The Operations Committee discussed having a one-day conference in conjunction with Water Monitoring Day. It was suggested that the VWMC have an audience of two targeted focus groups, with sessions in the morning focused towards one group and sessions in the afternoon that focus on the other group. It was also suggested that the VWMC simply provide a forum for monitors to come together, network, and discuss issues among themselves.

Stacey Moulds wondered if the VWMC would be interested in tying the VWMC conference with the Citizens for Water Quality Summit if it were held this fall. The Summit is tentatively scheduled for July 24th but may need to be pushed back to a later date. Jessica Schildroth will be calling various groups and individuals to gauge their availability and interest in helping with the CWQ summit planning so more information will be forthcoming.

National Monitoring Conference
Jane Walker distributed information on the National Monitoring Conference to be held May 17-20, 2004 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Darryl Glover reported that Don Smith and Roger Stewart with DEQ will be attending and can take two additional people with them if a ride is needed.

Committee Reports:
Operations Committee
The committee elected Robin Wilder as its chair for 2004 and developed a work plan for the year. All Steering Committee members were invited to join the Operations Committee. The group discussed possible dates and locations for the VWMC Conference. Potential speakers and “School for Monitors” (workshop) topics were suggested. Three potential target groups were identified: local governments, watershed groups, and schoolteachers. More discussions are planned.

Jane Cain explained that there are a number of groups looking at groundwater data but no one is using the same data. She suggested that the VWMC’s role could be to coordinate this work and proposed setting up a work group to do so. She offered to head the work group and noted that corporations that depend on groundwater might be interested in supporting a groundwater forum.
Communications Committee
Jody Aston and Stacey Brown will be co-chairs this year. Jane Walker distributed a copy of the new VWMC brochure and asked all committee chairs to send their requests for communications needs to Stacey Brown for inclusion into the Communications Committee’s 2004 work plan.

Inventory Committee
Jessica Schildroth will be the committee’s chair for 2004. They will soon be making some changes to the inventory and then begin identifying missing gaps in the inventory. The committee will also focus on getting the inventory into a GIS format.

Finance Task Force
Katie Register agreed to serve as chair of the Finance Task Force for 2004. The Virginia Tech Foundation is now able to accept donations on behalf of the VWMC. The committee will request financial support from the Steering Committee members and the VWMC membership. All former donors will also be contacted and requested to support the VWMC financially. The committee will be meeting on April 8th at 2:00 to discuss long-term funding. Everyone is invited to attend.

Coordination and Education Task Force
Marvin Booth will continue to serve as chair of the task force this year. Marvin reviewed the 2003 work plan and noted which tasks had been completed and which were likely to be completed in 2004. The committee will meet to develop the 2004 work plan at a later date.

Department of Environmental Quality Updates:
Darryl Glover distributed information on DEQ citizen monitoring contacts effective March 12, 2004. Darryl also mentioned that DEQ is receiving funding from EPA to conduct biological habitat assessments and will need to hire two temporary workers. DEQ will soon be offering to hire or contract a student and/or citizen monitor to compare the DEQ methods with EPA biological monitoring methods. Darryl reported that the Draft 2004 305(b)/303(d) Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report will be available on Monday, March 22, 2004 for public comment. Four public meetings will be held and public comments will be accepted through April 23, 2004. The report will be available for download at www.deq.state.va.us/wqa and the final, EPA approved report will be available for free on CD and on the DEQ website. Maps will be developed to accompany the report. Hard copies of the final maps will be available, but a fee will apply.

Next meeting Dates:
May 12, 2004 at USGS in Richmond (11 am – 3pm)
July 14, 2004 at DOF in Charlottesville (11 am – 3pm)