

**Horsepen Creek, Little Roanoke Creek, and unnamed tributary to Spencer Creek TMDL
Community Engagement Meeting Summary
Charlotte County Administrative Office, Board Room 250 LeGrande Ave., Suite A
Charlotte Court House, VA 23923
1:00 PM on 5 March 2025**

Aerin Portner kicked off the community engagement meeting for the Horsepen Creek, Little Roanoke Creek, and an unnamed tributary to Spencer Creek TMDL Study at 1:02 PM. She introduced herself as the TMDL Coordinator for the Blue Ridge Region of Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Aerin provided physical copies of the maps that were to be referenced and a handout that laid out modelling data which would be the main topic of discussion for the meeting. Following multiple announcements, most attendees signed the attendance sheet at the door. This sheet outlined the attendees' names, affiliation or if they are a landowner, and email addresses. In total there were 9 stakeholders present for this meeting.

Following the introduction, Aerin laid out the meeting objectives and then provided a summary of the information provided at the initial public meeting. She outlined all three of the watersheds with benthic impairments. This means that macroinvertebrates and the aquatic life are not doing as well as DEQ would like to see which indicates the water quality is not where it should be. The purpose of this TMDL is to look at why this is, how it can be improved, and what the community can do to help.

Following the summary of the previous meeting, Aerin lead the meeting using the provided handout. First on the subject of permitted potential point sources, the active and historical DEQ permits within the watersheds were presented. At the prompt of the question in the handout, Aerin solicited information that may be missing from the current data. Meeting attendees offered information regarding the many historic dams in the Upper Roanoke Creek watershed, four significant impoundments that are all under regulation. Ash Camp Creek and Twitty's Creek sediment TMDLs, developed in 2004, were brought up, as was a question regarding whether they were considered during the development of new solar locations. Aerin pointed out the significance of these types of planning meetings because solar and land development was not considered in 2004 when those were developed.

Moving on to the Land Use section of the handout, which included tables describing land use using the VGIN 2015 dataset, from the Benthic Stressor Analysis, provided context for the next portion of the meeting. Attendees noted that it seems correct that most pasture, cropland, and timber harvesting does occur more often along the waterways than it does on the ridges. Attendees did also note recent timber harvest in the top of the UT to Spencer Creek's watershed.

When looking at livestock numbers and best management practice (BMP) implementation, for Horsepen Creek, the livestock numbers were suggested to be cut in half, which is consistent with the portion of the HUC6 that this watershed makes up. One correction was that there are no active dairies left in any of these three watersheds. Pastures utilizing rotational grazing had good condition while those without are poor. Conservation tillage is very popular (roughly 3:1) and the only crops using traditional tillage are tobacco. The percentage of hay to pasture that appears in the figures seems correct. Most stream exclusions being implemented now are utilizing 50 ft. buffers. Roughly 70% of Little Roanoke Creek is likely excluded already. The most popular BMP practices for the district are stream exclusion and rotational grazing. The most popular BMP practice from NRCS is CSP. Hay quality has been increasing, and cover crop participation has tripled in the past 6 years.

Utilizing the expertise of the local residents and Department of Forestry in attendance, BMPs and harvest numbers were considered next. While it is challenging to look at the numbers in each specific watershed because usually these are broken out by county or region, they seem like they are correct. Recent trends do show harvesting being down in Charlotte County somewhat. This is likely from faster tree growth and a robust market of timber available currently. Timber thinning has also gone down because of the rising demand for wood chips. The trees harvested in the UT to Spencer Creek were mostly hardwoods though pine harvesting is the most common in this area.

Considering residential and urban development, the county population has been relatively the same since the 1860s, if not in decline. Within the three incorporated towns, there is a public utility, however, most of the county is entirely on septic systems. There's recently been an opportunity from data centers to see development around Keysville. This has led to some new recent homes being built in that area.

Also, a topic considering development, solar is very popular in this area of the state. The details which show roughly 3.7% of Horsepen Creek Watershed being optioned for solar were shared. This sparked a discussion where one meeting participant presented a detailed description of their experience with solar projects in the area. This is likely to continue to be a consideration for this area as solar farms convert permeable land into impervious spaces.

After the lively solar discussion, a discussion regarding local interest in conservation easements ensued. One meeting attendee strongly encouraged looking into the regulations that surround easements, and the shop the different types of easements out there because they vary in strictness. There were no follow up questions. Aerin concluded the meeting at 3:36 PM.