

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 25 June 2025

Aerin Portner and Kim Romero kicked off the meeting for the Horsepen Creek, Little Roanoke Creek, and an unnamed tributary to Spencer Creek TMDL study at 1:02 PM. Aerin reintroduced herself as the TMDL Coordinator for the Blue Ridge Region of Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Kim then went on to introduce herself as the Nonpoint Source (NPS) Coordinator for the Blue Ridge and Valley Regions of Virginia's DEQ. Kim briefly introduced the transition from TMDL to Advance Restoration Plan (ARP) and explained that she will be focusing on the Implementation Plan (IP) component of the ARP. Kim provided a handout that was to be referenced during the second half of the meeting when discussing Best Management Practices (BMP). An attendance sheet was signed by the attendees which outlined their names, affiliations or if they are a landowner, and email addresses. In total there were 7 stakeholders present for this meeting.

Following the introduction, Aerin briefly discussed the meeting's agenda, followed by a brief summary of the findings from the previous community engagement meeting. Aerin went on to introduce the change from developing a Total Maximum Daily Load plan to now developing an ARP. She emphasized that ARPs are not a regulatory action and will allow us to combine the steps outlined in a TMDL with the nine elements of an IP.

Moving along to discuss findings from the modeling, Aerin outlined the process used to reach results. Using the information gathered in the previous meeting, a model was used to see what the reduction values would look like on the ground. Horsepen phosphorus impairment was compared to four other streams with good bug communities and no impairments. Doing so, would model the reductions needed to meet the water quality standard. The sediment impairment in Little Roanoke and unnamed tributary (UT) to Spencer Creek was compared to Reedy Creek. Reedy Creek is similar in that it has slow low gradient system with beaver but is passing and doing well. The conditions from Reedy Creek watershed were scaled to reflect the other watersheds.

Following the discussion on how the reductions were calculated, Aerin discussed the general process for modeling and reductions. The watersheds in this ARP have been monitored since 2008. While the process outline is primarily used for TMDL models, the same general process applies to ARP. Aerin emphasized that because there are not many point sources in the watersheds, we are able to proceed with an ARP since we will be focusing on the non-point sources. When discussing the Horsepen Creek watershed, a 38% reduction of phosphorus loads from across all landscapes was needed to meet water quality standards. Aerin discussed harvested forested reductions and how Virginia's Department of Forestry (DOF) is likely already exceeding that reduction goals on timbered lands. She also mentioned that forest is not a major waste contributor so even if they were meeting 100% reductions, it would not make a huge difference. Additionally, Aerin emphasized the 10% margin of safety and 1% future growth that is taken into account when modeling this watershed. Discussion was opened up to ask if anyone had any

preferences for adjusting the numbers. One attendant asked if anyone could have straight pipes which led to a clarification on permits and inaccurate reporting on number of straight pipes in a watershed. Following the discussion, Aerin reviewed the reductions the model produced which would be needed to meet water quality standards. After discussing the reductions across the board, everyone agreed on to an even distribution of 38% reductions.

Moving on to the Little Roanoke Creek watershed, which includes UT to Spencer Creek, Aerin highlighted the larger amounts of sediment coming from the agriculture sources. A 74% reduction of sediment loads is needed to improve aquatic life communities and meet water quality standards. Additionally, a 10% margin of safety and 2% future growth were taken into account during the modeling process. Due to the high reductions needed, Aerin recommended to keep the distribution even for everyone. Doing so will also allow for the justification of funding to be distributed in any of the areas within the watershed. Concluding the discussion of reduction goals, Aerin transitioned the discussion to the Implementation Plan components of the ARP process.

Kim reintroduced herself and the water wheel, emphasizing the change in steps to include IP sooner. Kim went over the nine elements that will be included in the ARP and how they translate to the current process. Kim proposed that milestones will be set to gage the progress and effectiveness of the plan. Kim then discussed the different BMP options that fall under Agriculture control measures, Residential control measures, and Pet Waste and Stormwater control measures. Many of the BMPs that can help control phosphorus, will also help control sediment and vice versa. This program is completely voluntary so the input from the local homeowners is crucial in the success. It is also beneficial to include as many BMPs as possible that it will be covered under the 319(h) funding. Kim discussed what the 319(h) funding is, a timeline for funding, who can apply, and eligible areas. This helped answer questions from stakeholders about how they'd access this funding and when it would be distributed during BMP installation. This funding is treated like traditional reimbursement funding and is usually managed by a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), but can be distributed by other partners which will be discussed at a later meeting. Discussion also lead to Kim pointing out that DEQ's environmental data mapper (EDM) will display areas with IPs nearby that are already eligible to apply for funding. To conclude this introduction of an IP, Kim discussed ways that stakeholders, homeowners, or other local entities can help in developing the plan

One stakeholder pointed out that many landowners within these impaired watersheds are already enrolled in one or more SWCD administered BMPs. There is alternative funding already available to many farmers through the Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program (VACS). Funding from this program is contingent on specific BMP features, like buffer widths and acreage managed. While there is some existing funding for agricultural practices, little was known about residential practices. Stakeholders affirmed that there are no septic ordinances within Charlotte County nor are there plans to expand sewer coverage. It is likely that there are homes that haven't had their septic pumped out in 30-40 years since they were installed.

Kim displayed the BMPs that have been completed and documented by DCR during the last five years to show popular choices of BMPs within the county. A stakeholder pointed out that the displayed number of BMPs are not capturing the extent of BMP installations like displaying the acreage of land improved by BMPs would, due to the DCR tracking system. It was also suggested to consult with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to get more accurate numbers. SL-6W is more common than SL-6N because 50ft buffers qualify for 100% cost share through VACS. Riparian buffer establishment for all land owners, not just producers, was suggested as a potentially popular practice in the future as word spreads that it is

available. For most residential practices, there isn't a significant history to base popularity and interest on so a wide net will have to be cast for all options to be available to land owners. There is significant interest in conservation easements but management of land under easement is not yet decided upon. The Virginia Land Trust was brought up as a potential future partner that would be eligible to apply for funding.

Nearing the end of the meeting, final thoughts and questions were given by attendees. Two questions for Aerin and Kim came up about impaired streams ability to get better on their own and how old data can be used to establish TMDLs. Aerin and Kim explained that throughout much of Virginia, water quality trends are showing improvement, as can be seen on the EDM. It is possible for streams to improve on their own if conditions of the land within the watershed improve on their own. What plans like these do is attempt to enable landowners to make those land improvements faster through outreach, education, and funding. The data that supports creation of these plans can be a few years old by the time a plan is complete but this is due to the nature of needing a complete data set to analyze prior to beginning a project and then the length of time which these projects take, not only due to data analysis, but also to include public participation, and to receive approval from multiple third parties. One stakeholder asked another about cattle population trends, sighting what appears like declines. The stakeholder who was asked had the background to definitively say that cattle numbers are stable and even may see an increase due to the price of beef being up. With no further questions or thoughts to add, Aerin and Kim thanked the meeting attendees and concluded the meeting at 2:41 PM.