

March 5, 2005

**Honorable John Chichester
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
The General Assembly Building
910 Capitol Square, Sixth Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219**

Re: Accomplishment of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission

Dear Senator Chichester:

As the recently re-elected Chairman, I am pleased to present this report to you on the accomplishments of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission. I remain deeply appreciative of the work efforts of our new Vice Chairman, Senator Emmett Hanger, and the time and work effort he has expended on behalf of the Commission this year.

As defined in Section 61.1-659.27 of the Code of Virginia, the Commission's purpose and mission is to provide guidance for the stewardship and enhancement of the water quality and natural resources of the Rappahannock River Basin. The Commission is a forum in which the state, and fifteen local governments (The City of Fredericksburg and the counties of Culpeper, Spotsylvania, King George, Orange, Richmond, Essex, Westmoreland, Fauquier, Caroline Rappahannock, Stafford, Lancaster, Middlesex and our new member, Madison County) and citizens of the Commonwealth work to affect the Basin's water quality, quantity and other natural resources. We continue to promote communication, coordination and education, and by seeking appropriate solutions to identified problems, the Commission promotes activities by local, state and federal governments and individuals that foster voluntary resource stewardship for the environmental and economic health of the Basin.

Since our last report, we have continued to carry out our designated work program with significant success. I will share with you briefly some of our major accomplishments.

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In 2004, we conducted three meetings in July, September and December in Stafford County, Rappahannock County and in Richmond respectively. Legislation passed during the 2004 legislative session (HB-1227), required every member of the General Assembly that had a portion of their District in the basin to serve. Accordingly, new legislative members include Senator's Creigh Deeds, Mark Obenshain and Russell Potts. New members from the House of Delegates include Delegate's Scott Lingamfelter, Allen Louderback, Clifford Athey and Robert Bell.

The Water Allocation Group (WAG), recognizing the vital importance of sound planning for ground and surface water use, issued a working paper entitled *"Planning for Groundwater Use in the Rappahannock Basin/Recommendations by the Water Allocation Group to the Rappahannock River Basin Commission"* These recommendations seek to assist local and regional decision makers in meeting current and future demands for water. Further, the Water Allocation Group wrote an *"Outline of A Typical Water Supply Plan,"* the framework for water supply planning, and *"The Guiding Principles,"* which gives recommendations. Both documents were presented to the governing bodies of each locality and all localities in the Basin have passed resolutions endorsing the documents and have agreed to the surface water *Principals and Plan.*

RRBC Members participated in the process of rewriting The Rappahannock Tributary Strategy. The Tributary Strategy seeks to reduce and maintain at levels mandated by the Department of Environmental Quality levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediment in the Chesapeake Bay. This project was the product of monthly meetings with input from stakeholders (Soil and Water Conservations Districts, State and Federal agencies, planning district commissions, local governments, non government organizations, the Rappahannock Conservation Council and the RRBC). The meetings were led by DCR staff member, Matt Criblez, and we deeply appreciate the time and effort he dedicated to the project.

Regarding Water Supply Planning Regulations. The Commission was provided an update by the Department of Environmental Quality on the development of water supply planning regulations. The Commission provided direction to its staff member who participated in DEQ's Water Supply Planning Technical Advisory Committee. A framework for both the draft legislation and a state water supply plan has been completed. A report was presented to the full Senate and House of Delegates during the 2005 General Assembly.

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The Commission continues to work with and support the efforts of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in carrying out the project which will result in the complete removal of the Embrey Dam. The Commission was briefed on the February 23, 2004 blast to remove the dam. It's dismantling began in September 2004 and work continues on removing silt and concrete pieces of the dam. The historical remains of the 19th century canal locks adjacent to the dam will be left intact.

Finally, in order to improve public access to information on the work of the Commission we are in the midst of a significant redesign and update of the RRBC's website. We are hopeful that it will be up and running by the end of March 2005. Although the current website (www.rappriverbasin.state.va.us) is full of information, it is not as easy to navigate as we would like. We are looking forward to this improvement in 2005.

I am happy to enclose a copy of the Commission's Multi-Year Work program – July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006.

Please do not hesitate to call upon me if I may be of further assistance.

With kindest personal regards and all best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert J. Wittman
Chairman

1. Annually hold 4 meetings. Meetings to be held approximately every 2 months except when the General Assembly is in session.
 - a) Tentative schedule for 2005 meetings: March 23, June 22, September 21 and December 7. Schedule for 2006: March, June, September, December.
 - b) Meetings will focus primarily on:
 - 1) The Water Supply Planning Project, and
 - 2) The required implementation of the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy.
2. Communicate the activities of the Commission with member localities. This shall be accomplished in writing and through staff and member visits.
 - a) Strive to present the current recommendations of the Water Supply Planning Project for the Rappahannock to the governing body of each member locality.
 - b) Develop and implement methods to facilitate more exchange of information on local techniques and efforts that are intended to improve the Rappahannock River. Enhance information sharing between basin localities on successful and unsuccessful policies, programs and other efforts. Three of the four meetings of the Commission should include information on at least one local program which addresses protections or improvements to the water resources of the basin.
 - c) Improve communications with all members of the basin's governing bodies. Communicate the work of the Commission to all members of the governing bodies, chief administrator, planner and utility staff of the participating jurisdictions. Post newsletters on the website, email notices of new postings and enhance the website to establish links to the localities as well as resources pertinent to efforts we are addressing.
 - d) Encourage Planning District Commission Executive Directors to regularly report the work of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission to the members of their Planning District Commission. Offer to attend at least one meeting of each Planning District Commission annually to explain the current activities of the Commission.

- f) The staff of the Commission will support Commission members with necessary information and assistance to enable members to assume the role, when appropriate, of local leaders on behalf of the river.
3. Communicate with the public and interested stakeholder groups:
- a) Produce at least two newsletters annually, during the summer and in December. Others should be produced and distributed as budget resources exist. The newsletters will provide information on the discussions and actions at Commission meetings. Newsletters will be made available through a combination of direct mail, email and website posting.
 - b) Enhance and maintain the internet site, which provides information on upcoming meetings and activities of the Commission, access to the basin atlas and other information. The site will allow and encourage public comment.
 - 1) Gather and disseminate information through the website on water quality efforts taking place in other parts of Virginia and the country.
 - 2) Identify methods and assist localities of the basin to fulfill their responsibility to educate the public on water quality and natural resource issues. Prepare and provide to localities an informational piece on the Commission for localities to have available for the public.
 - c) Identify and include existing interest groups, as appropriate, in the Commission's information exchange efforts. (Examples include: small watershed groups, community organizations, business organizations, economic development and tourism councils). Identify the most cost effective strategies to communicate with interested parties.
 - d) Respond to requests to speak to statewide organizations on the activities of the Commission.
4. Serve as a forum for the discussion of issues impacting the environmental and economic health of the Basin;
- a) Encourage or facilitate the development of a Water Management Plan for the Rappahannock. This plan will embody many elements including the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy, the Basinwide Water Supply Planning Document, the Rappahannock Water Quality Management Plan and other elements determined necessary to provide a comprehensive water

- management plan. The elements of the Rappahannock Water Management Plan should be comprehensive and long range.
- b) In the Commission's deliberations and efforts to fulfill its mission of providing "guidance for the stewardship and enhancement of the water quality and natural resources of the Rappahannock River Basin", the Commission must be mindful of the impacts of growth on water quality and the natural resources of the basin. Identify methods to assist localities and the state with information on the relationship between growth and water quality and other natural resources.
 - c) Share information with localities on implementation techniques for the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy. Provide the opportunity for dialogue between members, stakeholders and other interested parties on assessing the implementation of the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy.
 - d) Assist other stakeholders in identifying methods and assist localities of the basin to fulfill their responsibility to educate the public on water quality and natural resource issues.
 - f) Encourage and facilitate river related information exchange between the staff of the various localities of the basin. Those involved should include at least chief planning and utility officials.
 - g) Monitor the implementation plans and local and state responsibilities of the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement relative to the Rappahannock basin.
 - h) Encourage all parties involved in the implementation of the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy to maintain the appropriate balance between point and non-point solutions. Place emphasis on implementing the Tributary Strategy relative to the non-point strategies aimed at mitigating land development impacts.
 - i) Encourage federal officials to support research funding that enhances the development of cost-effective pollution control and prevention technologies beyond the existing level of technology.
5. Make recommendations to the General Assembly and local governing bodies regarding issues concerning the Rappahannock River.

- a) Strongly advise the Governor and the General Assembly that in order for the implementation of the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy to succeed the state must meet its obligation to provide its share of the necessary funding.
 - b) Advise the Governor and General Assembly that it is critical to the successful implementation of the Commonwealth's water supply planning efforts that appropriate technical assistance and funding be provided.
6. Create the foundation authorized in State Code in order to facilitate the raising private funds in support of the Commission's efforts.
- a) Identify and seek financial contributions, consistent with the bylaws of the Commission, from private point sources within the basin.
7. Approach Greene County about the importance of participating in the Commission.