

January 22, 2007

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable John Chichester  
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Vince Callahan,  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

c/o Division of Legislative Automated Systems (DLAS)  
910 Capitol Square  
General Assembly Building, Suite 660  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Attention: Legislative Documents and Reports Processing

Re: 2006 Accomplishment of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission

Dear Governor Kaine:

As Chairman of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission, I am pleased to present this report to you on the accomplishments during 2006. I remain deeply appreciative of the continued membership and the work efforts expended by members of the Senate and my fellow co-workers in the House of Delegates.

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,

Robert J. Wittman  
Chairman

Annual Report of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission  
January 2007

As defined in Section 62.1-69.27 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 fourteen local governments to include The City of Fredericksburg and the counties of Culpeper, Spotsylvania, King George, Orange, Richmond, Essex, Westmoreland, Fauquier, Caroline, Rappahannock, Stafford, Lancaster, and 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. In 2006, we conducted two meetings in June and December in the cities of Fredericksburg and Richmond (at the General Assembly Building) respectively. Two planned meetings, in March and September, had to be cancelled due to the Special Sessions of the General Assembly.

The Rappahannock River Basin Nonpoint Source Workgroup: There have been seven meetings of the Nonpoint Source Workgroup. Their charge is how the tributary strategy can be implemented in a reasonable way with a high degree of success. Dr. William Cox of Virginia Tech, who had previously worked with the RRBC and its Water Allocation Group, prepared a summary of the laws, regulations and agreements that govern water quality in Virginia in 2005. This past year RRBC staff made updates to Dr. Cox's summary. This summary is posted on the Commission's website and is used by water resource professional across the Commonwealth.

Using that resource the work group has found that appropriate authority exists to manage nonpoint source pollution, however, the authority is fragmented. Many who have responsibility for nonpoint source pollution oversight find the variety of laws and regulations confusing and have difficulty clearly matching authority to responsibility. The work group will continue in 2007 to work on the seven items assigned by the Commission. Those tasks are:

1. Clarify the legal authority of various stakeholders to act and identify where authority is appropriate or inadequate to allow effective implementation of the solutions identified in the Rappahannock Tributary Strategy.
2. Encourage "buy-in" of state, regional and local governments and agencies to the appropriate regulation of land use activities and land development in support of river-friendly water quality objectives.
3. Is current or planned water quality monitoring going to provide effective data to evaluate the success of implementing nonpoint strategies? If not, recommendations for improvements will be made.

Annual Report of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission  
January 2007

4. Identify how to properly document successful and unsuccessful practices and to communicate those findings to others.
5. On-going assessment of the practicality of implementation strategies or techniques and providing feedback to DCR and other appropriate overseers.
6. Recommend how to effectively track changes in land use, and the rate of change, in the basin and how to use that information efficiently to make decisions that improve water quality.
7. Provide input and feedback to decision makers on prioritizing the commitment of resources to maximize results for dollars invested.

RRBC Members participate in the implementation of 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. The staff of the Commission participated in the HB 1150 planning meeting in May 2006.

At the December meeting, a presentation was made by DCR in regards to Agricultural Conservation Market Research and Communication Plan. The project objectives were to identify major decision steps and influencers; determine perceptions of conservation and the Cost-Share Program; identify the most believable messages; understand needs of district staff; and define the marketing media that maximize audience reach. Their conclusions found that: there are no quick fixes in Nonpoint Source Pollution. To reach the set goals there needs to be improvements in program delivery, more efficient practices, and more effective tracking. In addition to move beyond agriculture there is a need to engage local governments including developers & homeowners, and need for improved coverage on all land uses, improved planning, and improved development practices.

At that same December meeting, the City of Fredericksburg presented information regarding conservations easements on the Rappahannock and Rapidan shorelines. It set clear goals for the Commonwealth, the region and the Commission with the understanding of the current terms and conditions. Current easement holders include the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries.

A significant redesign and update of the RRBC's website has been completed. Our new website address is [www.RappRiverBasin.org](http://www.RappRiverBasin.org). There is an ongoing effort to maintain and keep the website updated. In addition to a listing of members and meetings and events it contains information on Commission meetings and the continuing efforts of the Non-point Source Group.