

Stream Health Initiative: Develop

Project Engagement

VIEWS

368

RESPONSES

699

SUBSCRIBERS

18

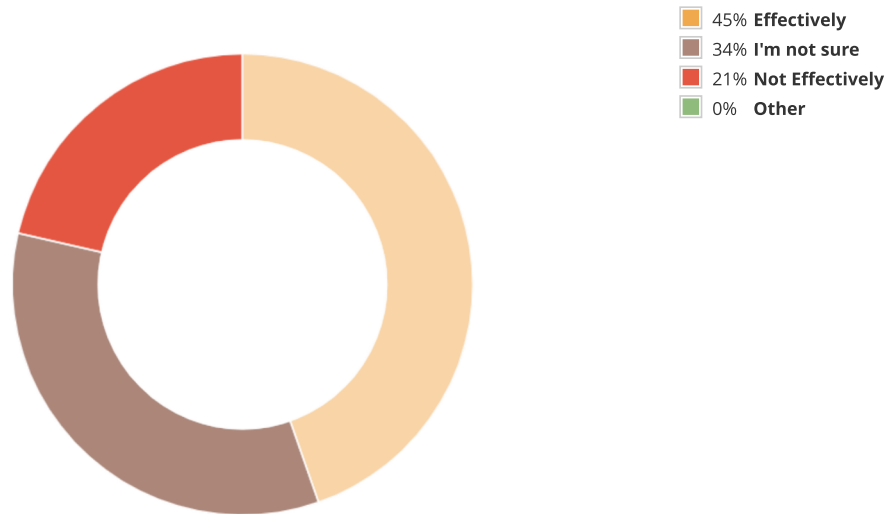
PARTICIPANTS

62






COMMENTS

113

Reestablish county-wide requirements for perpetual retention and management of 100' stream buffers, with exemptions for agriculture, forestry, and other limited land uses.



56 respondents

-
-  **De Forest Mellon, Jr.** Ideally, livestock need to be kept away from streams, which they pollute and otherwise disturb (raising sediment) Thus, any strategy for preserving 100' buffers that has exceptions for agriculture will not be successful.
one month ago ⊕ 9 Agree
-  I don't think there should be many exceptions. I see cows standing in the river—that's not right. And agricultural runoff can contain too many nutrients. These sorts of uses should not be allowed as exceptions.
one month ago ⊕ 7 Agree
-  **Kim Cosner Lilley** As the next generation of timber farmers, I wonder why there would be an exemption for forestry. Yes, 100 ft is pretty wide, but timber thinning and clear cutting very much disturbs the soil adding to run off. And the mandatory chemical sprays should be kept well away from streams.
one month ago ⊕ 6 Agree
-  **Nancy Hunt** My property owners association has attempted to create a limited buffer around our pond and streams. We do not have 100 feet but we can do 8-10 feet. Unfortunately our landscaping company still does not understand that they should leave shrub growth around the pond and not cut the grass down to 3-4 inches at the edge of the pond and streams. Also we have one resident who wants to have a "lawn" down to the pond that she can view from her porch. This so called master gardner says that she is insured by the County and she can spray at the edge of the pond. We have repeatedly asked her to stop her activity on the common grounds and even assessed a penalty for violations to no avail.
one month ago ⊕ 6 Agree
-  **j. sitler** While this is a very effective measure, it needs to apply to agricultural lands. This is the same group that killed the stormwater fee program but like it or not they are a major source of sediment and bacteria pollution that ends up in our waterways.
one month ago ⊕ 3 Agree



Information should be provided to all affected property owners where buffers are placed on their land which includes permitted and non-permitted uses within the buffers. Stream buffers are not required disclosure statements as part of real estate transactions and most people don't know they have them which leads to violations. These violations consume staff time/resources and are costly to landowners.

one month ago

[3 Agree](#)



I think 100' should be the minimum necessary to help maintain stream health and required.

one month ago

[2 Agree](#)



Even with exceptions, an overlay district for stream buffers provides more legal footing to regulate and manage buffers towards a common goal. Without the county-wide requirement, individual property owners can decide how they want to use the space which may run counter to the goals of the Stream Health Initiative. In response to other comments about exceptions- this is but one tool in the toolbox. Voluntary incentives (either from the County or other government agencies) can provide reasons for farmers who currently use that space for livestock or crop production (compared to urban/suburban uses that generally have no other utility) to give up that valuable space for the common good.

one month ago

[2 Agree](#)



Samantha Provencio I agree with many of the other comments regarding the exception for agricultural use (specifically livestock) being ineffective and harmful. Riparian buffers are essential to the stream stability, as well, which are damaged allowing these exceptions.

one month ago

[1 Agree](#)



In rural areas of the county, such as where I reside, I think agriculture is a major contributor to stream pollution and sediment in the streams. For a number of years I had a cattle farm immediately upstream from my property, and I saw first hand the sediment and pollution generated by this operation. During warm months cattle would congregate in the stream causing erosion to the stream banks and fouling the water with their waste. This upstream cattle farm was sold several years ago and the land is no longer used for grazing, and I have seen a marked improvement in the water quality of the stream that passes through my property. Perhaps making riparian fencing projects more attractive and affordable for cattle farmers would help address this problem.

15 days ago



I don't think it's legally feasible to apply such a regulation to agricultural lands (despite the environmental benefits that doing so might provide). As a consequence, enacting a stream buffer regulation --but with exemptions that could apply to 80% or more of the county's actual land area-- may not have a significant impact on stream health. So, I'd cut the losses here, and focus energy on other strategies. And on a side note, if the stream buffer regulation prevents kids from playing in or near the creek, and prevents people from having a small boat launch, pedestrian bridge, or other aquatic features, then in the long term, this regulation will only further entrench our separation from nature, and contribute to a culture that is utterly ignorant of the environment on which our lives depend. People need to be able to get out there and ramble. If they don't learn to love and respect the natural world, they won't sacrifice or fight for it.

18 days ago



Tom Leback The effectiveness of the steam buffers could be compromised by exemptions for agriculture, forestry, other limited land uses, or when a 100' buffer can not be achieved. Are there options for narrower buffers where a 100' buffer can not be achieved. I would think that a 50' buffer, for example, would be better than no buffer at all. Or, if a buffer can not be achieved at all, can the landowner pay for buffer improvements elsewhere?

22 days ago



Agricultural exemption should be limited to organic crops, otherwise herbicides and pesticides are going directly into streams.

one month ago



Brian Scruby Bacteria and many other organisms are naturally a part of what is in our streams and rivers. Native wildlife are a factor in why bacteria are naturally present in our waterways. If you exclude livestock from streams, the bacteria are still going to be there.

one month ago



Brian Scruby Livestock, when not overstocked above what the land can handle, are a positive feature of maintaining a healthy riparian ecosystem. Bison and elk were common here not that long ago and had a positive influence on the riparian environment. Since we no longer have bison and elk here, domestic livestock are our best option to fill the important niche that they once did. The trails that livestock make in accessing streams open up ways for native wildlife (such as herons and kingfishers) to get to the water, and these trails are no more impactful than human-made paths to access waterways.

one month ago



Some farmers use streams to water their livestock-have for generations. I prefer that over leaking septic tanks that people can't fix or the chemicals that run off from vineyard pest and mold prevention spraying.

one month ago



Sara M. Robinson Again we have to monitor the type of agricultural and forestry runoff in order to properly mitigate water quality.

one month ago



The exemptions for the rural industries such as agriculture and forestry are critical to maintain. Must weigh the cost of implementation vs WQ improvement gains as enforcement will require county staff additions. Consistent implementation of existing county code should achieve the goal without the need for additional code creation.

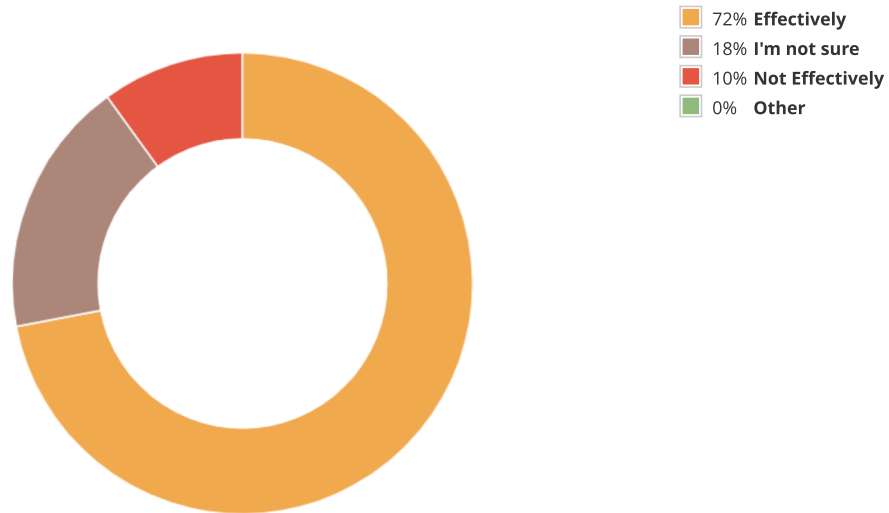
one month ago



Caroline I think riparian buffers of vegetation is a proven method? I am frustrated in my yard because that 100' buffer space by our creek (Key West neighborhood) is a pathway for at least 2 cables (WiFi, I believe, and telephone), so could be dug up at any time, making it a no-go zone for long-term, major, costly plantings 😞

one month ago

Develop restoration requirements and guidelines for use when agricultural or forestal land is converted to residential use and for mitigation use when violations of the Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) occur.



50 respondents

-
- Caroline** Yes, please! The “clear everything, build, then plant non-natives” by developers/corporations, if not tackled directly through legislation, will be a continued obstacle in eco-climate restoration efforts.

one month ago 7 Agree
 - Nancy Hunt** Will only be effective is enforcement is carried out including fines.

one month ago 4 Agree
 - De Forest Mellon, Jr.** I agree entirely.

one month ago
 - Runoff from developed areas tend to be faster and hotter than other land uses. If you do not specify how development next to streams is to be controlled/regulated/mitigated, then you have created a large barrier to successfully meeting the goals of the Stream Health Initiative.

one month ago 1 Agree
 - Need to be more specific about what is meant by "converted to residential use". Most of the county's land area is a rural area, and yet, people live there, mixed in and amongst the pastures and forests. If someone buys 40 acres in the rural area and builds a farmhouse, does that count as conversion to a "residential use"? If someone builds a 3-room cabin on a 100-acre wooded parcel, did they just convert the forest into a "residential use"? Or are we talking more specifically about when land is subdivided, rezoned, or developed into exclusively residential / commercial developments (aka, the "suburban sprawl" that characterizes most of 29 north?).

18 days ago
 - Why are there no "fines" implemented for violations?

one month ago
 - Stream Health Team** The Water Protection Ordinance does currently include fines as an enforcement option. They are imposed by DEQ if streams are impacted.

28 days ago



Would be nice if the county required developers to protect stream buffers. MAYBE, if the county stopped building on previously designated green spaces, this wouldn't be a problem.

one month ago



Samantha Provencio The follow through on enforcement would make all the difference. There should be some consideration if the residential conversion is for development purposes or an individual home owner.

one month ago



Sara M. Robinson Why can't we dedicate funds to building "breakwater walls" along sections of the river banks that are particularly vulnerable.

one month ago



Martha Springett We will be working hard in DunLora to rectify the enormous damage done by the clear cutting done by developers of Belvedere

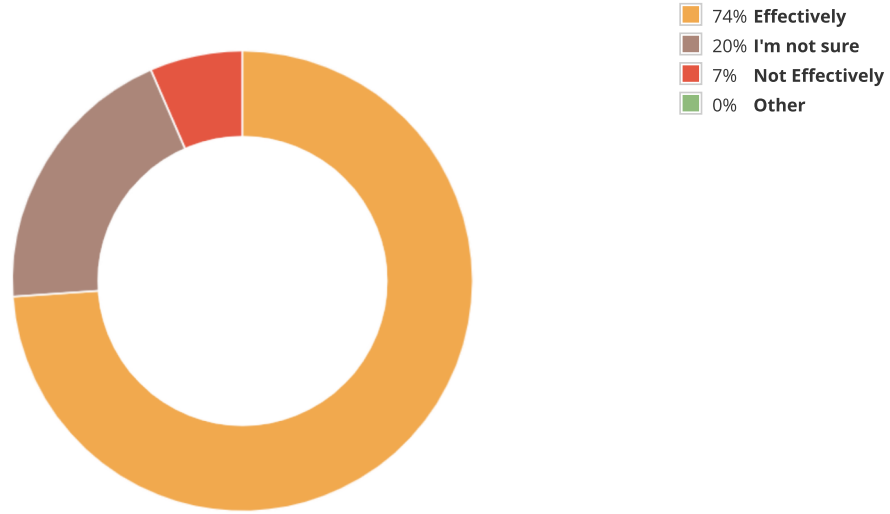
one month ago




Should not be limited to just conversion to residential uses, such include commercial conversion, etc.


one month ago


Amend the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that environmental restoration projects, specifically stream mitigation and nutrient banks, are permitted by-right throughout the County, subject to consistent regulations for their review and approval.




46 respondents

-
-  **Caroline** Clean water, including our streams (bays, and oceans) is a universal issue, with universal impact. Positive government regulation for cleaner water has my support.

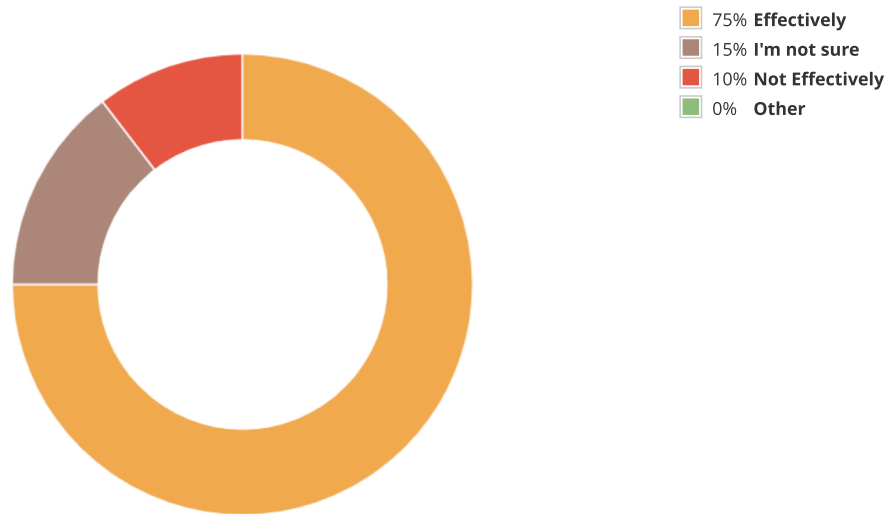
one month ago 👍 5 Agree
 -  Yes!!! The streams belong to all of us.

one month ago 👍 1 Agree
 -  The county resident should be able to restore stream buffers on their property without zoning or BOS approval (who does whatever they want anyway).

one month ago
 -  Yes- just make sure to set criteria for what counts as a stream section needing restoration. Not everything is impaired to the point of needing work.

one month ago
-

Review existing policies and regulations to identify opportunities for better alignment with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA).



48 respondents

-
- Caroline** Again, healthy water environments impact is universally - our health, the health of our domestic animals and all of nature, our economies (fishing), tourism, etc.

one month ago ⊕ 2 Agree
 - Samantha Provencio** This sounds like a soft entry into the CBPA. Choosing policies etc. that work for Albemarle County. With current opposition from agricultural stakeholders this sounds like a nice compromise and worth dialogue rather than complete adoption of the CBPA.

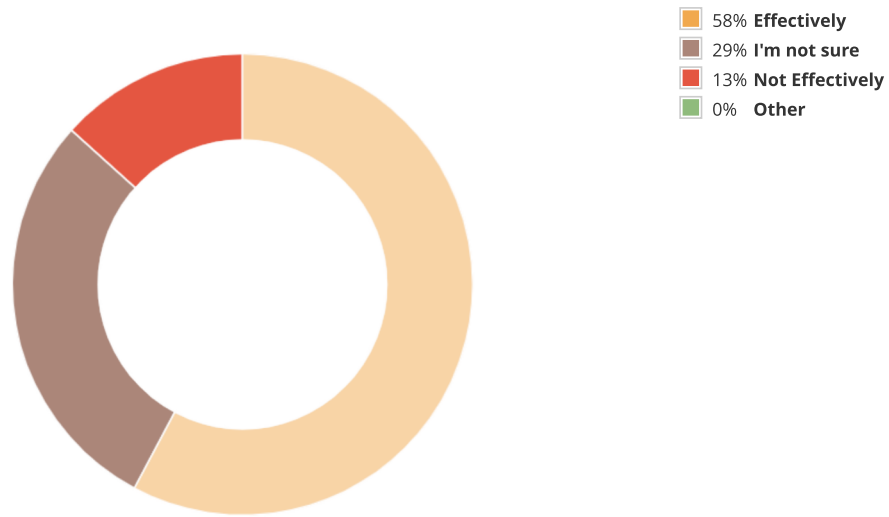
one month ago ⊕ 1 Agree
 - Brian Scruby** We need to do more water testing in our county to be better informed about what we are sending on to the Chesapeake Bay. We should all be concerned about the health of the bay, a precious natural resource. But we also need to be mindful of what really constitutes a healthy riparian environment in our county. Don't forget that the water we send to localities downstream could be in great shape, and a lot of bad things could happen to it as it makes its way through other localities downstream. We should invest our energies and resources in monitoring our own water as it passes through our county by testing water at critical points such as near the discharges of our local reservoirs.

one month ago
 - The BOS tried to implement the "rain tax"-forcing farmers to pay for "impervious" surfaces -ie barn roofs, dirt roads, run-in sheds etc. Yet the BOS is heavily pushing to allow developers to build EVERYWHERE including the previously ID'd green spaces.






one month ago
 - The Chesapeake Bay Act too cumbersome and thus is ineffective in improving WQ.

one month ago
-

Adopt the full Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA).



45 respondents

-
-  **Caroline** I have not read the entire CBPA. My guess is that it represents an ideal set of protocols to maximize the health of our waterways, the Bay, and our water economies. I would think that ongoing efforts to meet these ideal standards is a worthy goal, especially if those in agriculture can be assisted in finding solutions to the issues they find restrictive.
- one month ago [4 Agree](#)
-  As a county we continually keep trying to reinvent the wheel, when we know the Bay Act has been successful east of 95 for many years. Each time we implement Bay Act regulation piecemeal we leave way too many loopholes that make it impossible to enforce ordinances to protect streams. That said, I can see grandfathering in any agricultural property with an existing 35ft buffer / exclusion until the next building permit, rezoning, special use permit, etc.
- one month ago [1 Agree](#)
-  I would add that working with the surrounding localities to also adopt CBPA would be beneficial. Otherwise, there will be those that argue the lost economic opportunities (from development/angry landowners leaving to neighboring areas) is too much to risk (one could ask Ellicott City about the cost of only listening to economic development arguments). So while the CBPA has greater restrictions on land uses and development, there has to be a recognition that we are seeing more intense rain events more frequently and the old rules are not sufficient for the long term.
- one month ago [1 Agree](#)
-  Be careful what you wish for here. The CBPA comes with a tremendous number of restrictions which are going to have significant impacts on how people use their property. It is also going to require changes in how the county reviews plans of development and associated studies, which as of now is woefully inadequate from a stream buffer standpoint.
- one month ago [1 Agree](#)
-  The BOS wants to force the farmers to jump through hoops to "protect the streams" yet they have been aggressively developing residential land and allowing all kinds of redevelopment (tear down and rebuild commercial prop) and new vineyards.
- one month ago



The survey questions don't have an option for "this is effective, but may be too costly". The "About this Strategy" box calls out cost, here - and I think that's an important consideration. So while I responded "Effectively" to the survey, I would nevertheless suggest that adoption be deferred for the time being.

one month ago



There are other Counties like Caroline that have been under the Bay Act for many years and it doesn't seem to be an unreasonable portion of their budget. I think we need to look at localities currently under the act and do a true accounting of what it'd cost, not just speculate.

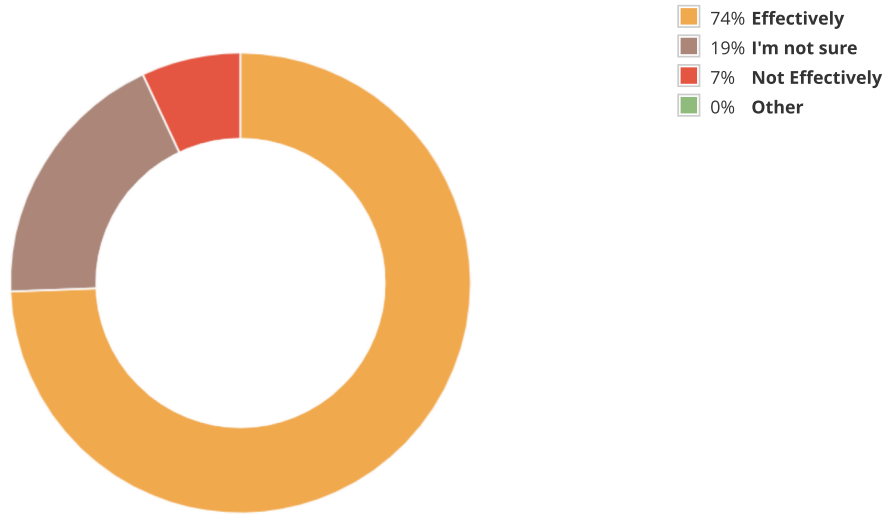
one month ago




The Chesapeake Bay is designed for primary RPA lands, not ancillary uplands. The Ches Bay Act is too cumbersome to effectively improve stream health.


one month ago


Establish a riparian buffer easement program focused on protecting water quality through new riparian buffer easements in high priority areas; and by strengthening existing whole-property easements with additional provisions to protect stream health.





43 respondents


-
-  **Caroline Kipps** I would love for someone to come and assist and educate homeowners in my neighborhood to increase the health of our creek, which flows into the Rivanna River.


one month ago [1 Agree](#)
 -  I'm not clear on what this means. Is this effectively a transfer of county taxpayer money to the landed gentry? Seems to me the people who own waterfront property should be taking care of the environment of their own accord, not because we're paying them to do so.


18 days ago
 -  There is not enough information in the strategy language that provides me with an understanding of what it would accomplish.

one month ago
 -  Some may see this as a 'take' of their property if they are not 100% voluntary.

one month ago
 -  **Stream Health Team** A conservation easement is 100% voluntary, and not a 'taking'.

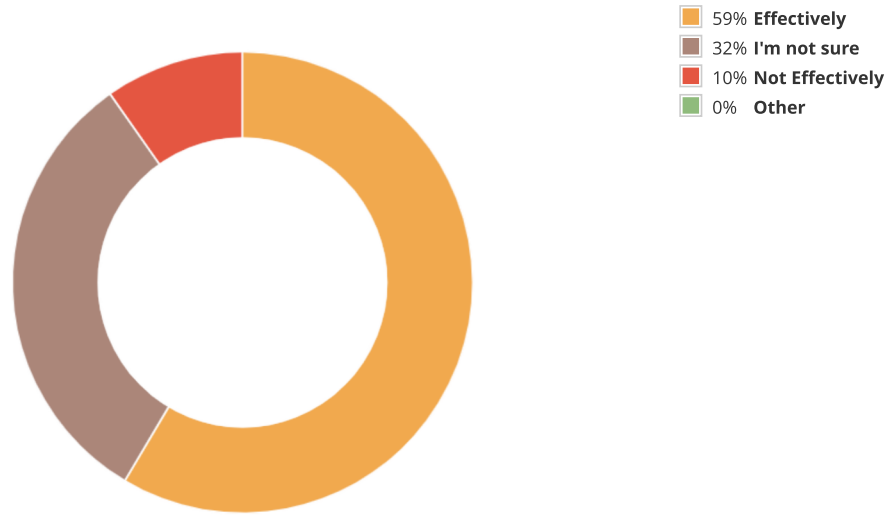
one month ago [1 Agree](#)
 -  As long as management within the buffer is allowed to practice exempted land uses such as agriculture or silviculture and the ability to mitigate negative impacts such as invasive species, insect, disease or natural disasters, etc.

one month ago
 -  nn

one month ago
 -  n

one month ago
-

Establish a Conservation Easement Assistance Program to help landowners with the transactional costs of placing land under conservation easement.



41 respondents

-
- I'd regulate it instead.

one month ago [1 Agree](#)
 - Caroline Kipps** Conservation easements have their pluses and minuses, especially on large land areas within extended families. Conservation easements for particularly sensitive portions of a property is an interesting idea. If riparian buffers become more regulated, they probably don't also need conservation easements? But certainly incentives for conservation easements of larger natural or agricultural areas may provide incentives for families flexible enough to do this.

one month ago [1 Agree](#)
 - I'd rather have the county focus on buying stream buffers outright. If the public is going to pay for land, then it should become public land. Otherwise, it's just crony capitalism, wherein the landowners find new and creative ways to avoid paying for the upkeep of a society from which they have benefited.

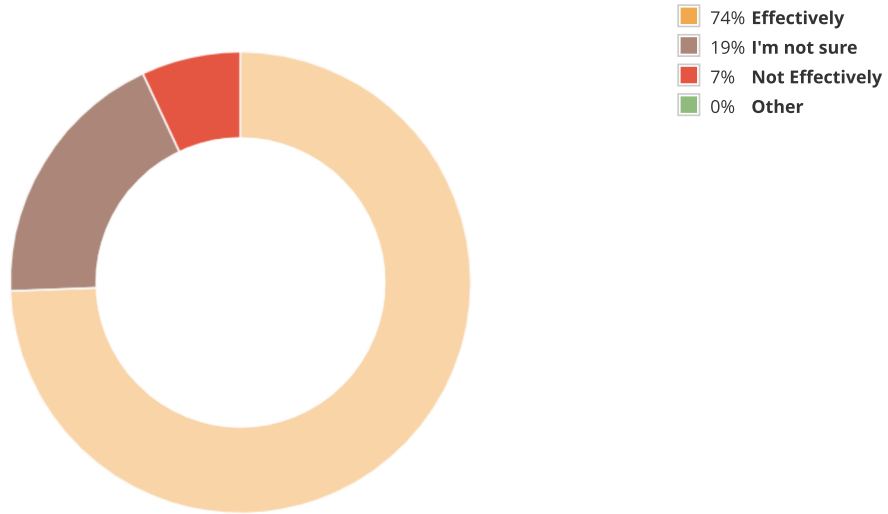
18 days ago
 - where would the monies come from to fund this assistance program?

one month ago
 - What are the transactional costs and how much are they?


one month ago
 - Stream Health Team** Transactional costs might include attorney's fees, cost of an appraisal, and a property survey. The costs will vary based on the size of the property and complexity of the project.


one month ago
-


Create a Stream Health Improvement Fund that offers assistance to landowners engaged in conservation or cost-share programs, and to support specific restoration projects that benefit stream health.





43 respondents

-
-  **Caroline Kipps** We have spent thousands of dollars on native plants over 15 years-I had no idea there were any cost-assistance programs for this until recently. I think this could be enormously helpful to homeowners— like me and my husband. We are not wealthy, estate owners in the County, yet are very invested in trying to create balance and a riparian buffer on our little, semi-rural property that is on a hill and slopes down to the Key West creek. For all the good we do, the neighbors on our street spraying their yards every month or whatever are grossly undermining whatever I am doing on my half-acre 😞 We need education.

one month ago 👍 2 Agree
 -  I hope these programs are means-tested.

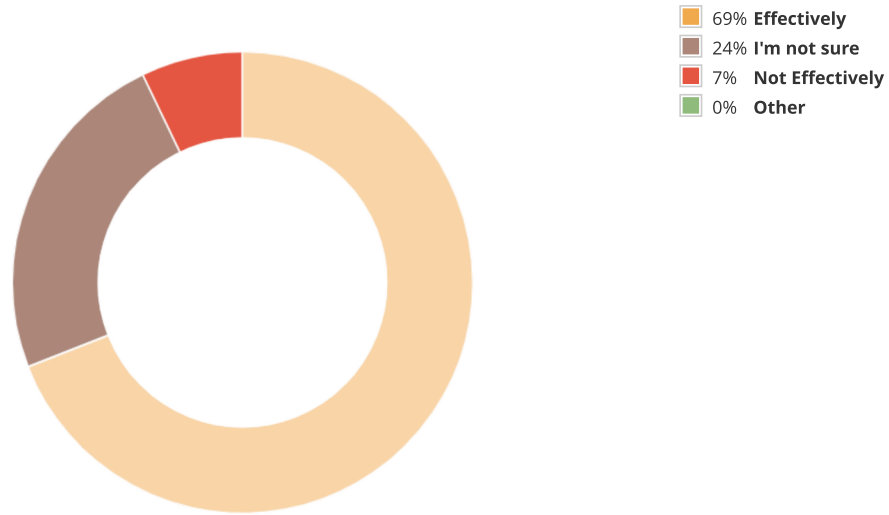
18 days ago
 -  A drop in the bucket. What about the problems that emanate from areas upstream beyond the County control

one month ago
 -  There are mountain running along the west side of the county. The vast majority of streams start there and flow down in our county.

one month ago
 -  **Nancy Hunt** But limited to the amount of funds allocated to the SHIF

one month ago
-

Support cost-share programs that promote best management practices that improve stream health.



42 respondents

-
- The fee to connect a Development area residence to County sewer (thereby decommissioning the septic system) is prohibitive. Cost sharing would encourage greater participation.

23 days ago
 - Specifically on non-agricultural lands - like large acre subdivisions.

27 days ago
 - It's worth noting though that we've had voluntary agricultural incentive programs since the 1930's. Voluntary programs are great, and we should continue supporting them, but we need more than just the status quo if we expect to improve stream health.

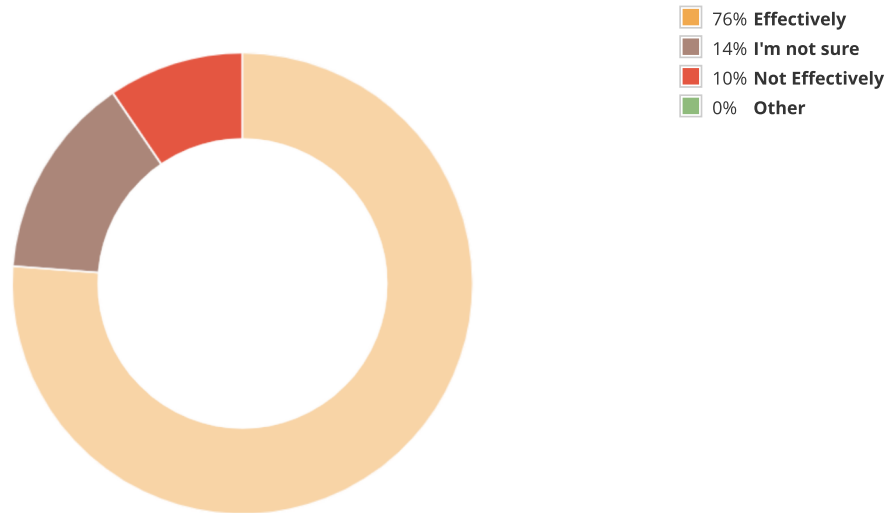
one month ago
 - Why are voluntary programs so strongly supported by agriculture and what are the numbers that support that voluntary programs are getting the buffers and stream health we need?

one month ago
 - Not enough detail.








one month ago
 - **Sara M. Robinson** I think we need more details as to how cost-share programs are structured and specifics as to how they would work.

one month ago
-

Explore options to encourage on-site treatment of stormwater and minimization of impervious surfaces by providing an incentive for low-impact development (LID) practices.



42 respondents

-
-  **Caroline Kipps** Please. Everywhere. Every developer.
one month ago 👍 4 Agree
 -  **j. sitler** We need to do much more to educate developers and landowners about onsite treatment of their stormwater. The effort needs to provide resources for existing properties. Maybe with the sale of every property, a stormwater assessment needs to be completed.
one month ago 👍 1 Agree
 -  I would like to see a way to discourage the paving of driveways in rural areas. I do not think most people do not appreciate the negative impacts of paving.
21 days ago
 -  Pervious paving and raingarden design is such common practice in the landscape architecture community these days that there are few barriers to implementation and costs are not prohibitive. It should be easy to do this.
23 days ago
 -  It's worth noting that adopting the Bay Act would do this.
one month ago
 -  Depends on the ease of getting a grant and the amount the grant would actually cover for LID. HOA's are often run by volunteers, so time and effort is often limited.
one month ago
 -  Don't understand "on site treatment".
one month ago



Samantha Provencio "Encourage"? New developments should be required, not incentivized. HOAs can be given informational resources and advice and a time frame to work within to repair and come into compliance.

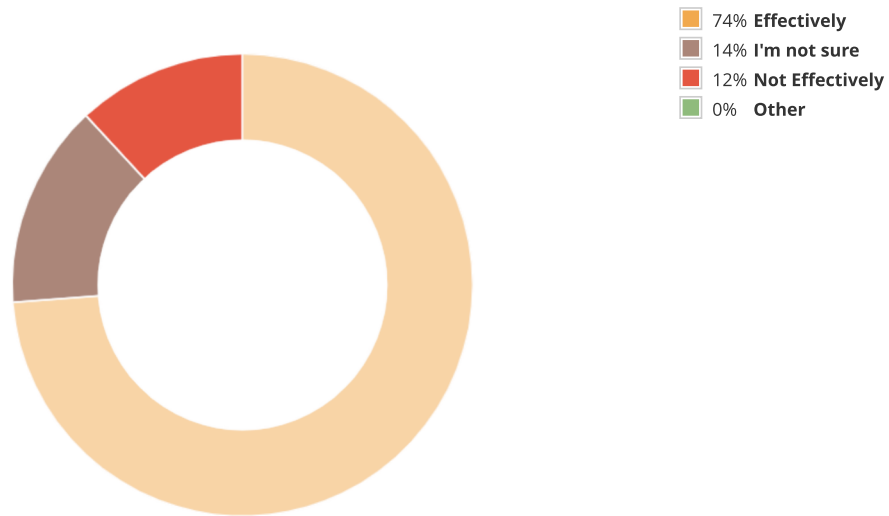
one month ago



Nancy Hunt Again limited to amount of funds allocated. Probably not a lot of money for this effort.

one month ago

Develop a county-wide water quality testing program for landowners that could also serve as a screening tool to help identify waterways that would benefit from long-term monitoring or stream health improvement projects.



41 respondents



I encourage you to consider coordinating with the UVA Department of Environmental Sciences on this topic as well - there is considerable interest in increasing monitoring in local watersheds.

20 days ago



This might help identify failing septic systems.

21 days ago



Brian Scruby This is by far the best idea I have seen in all of these proposals. This would probably entail significant costs, but the information would be valuable.

one month ago



While testing can be helpful, please prioritize implementation portions of this initiative, which will have a more immediate impact.

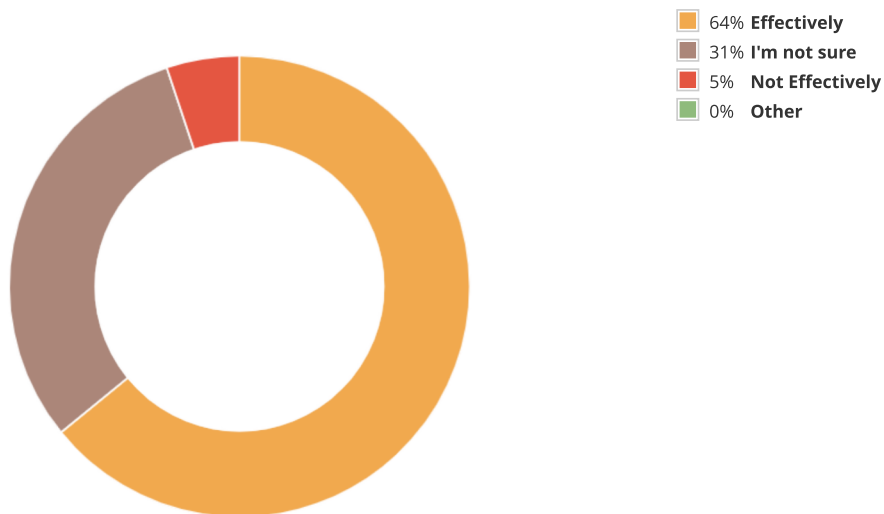
one month ago




Caroline Kipps I have long wondered whether our creek has been tested and what, if anything, we could do to assist it. Our casual neighborhood association would likely respond positively to stream restoration efforts here in Key West.


one month ago


Expand and formalize a new landowner education project.



39 respondents

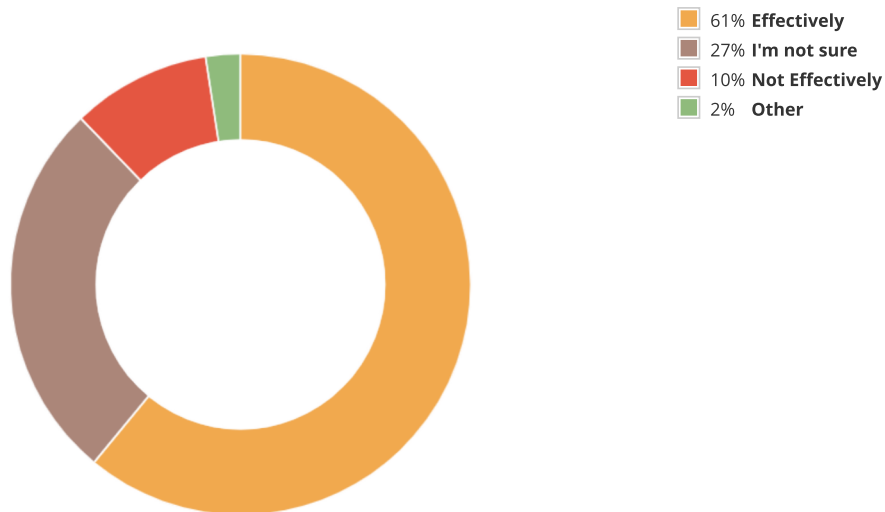
-
-  **Sara M. Robinson** Every thing, every change, every idea has to begin with education, even if it is by simply distributing a well-thought-out brochure to landowners.

one month ago ⊕ [4 Agree](#)
 -  **Caroline Kipps** Yep. Without education, and directly confronting the habituated use of marketed lawn products, nothing will change.

one month ago ⊕ [4 Agree](#)
 -  As long as the potential outreach is unbiased and advocates access to the best available information for management strategies.

one month ago
-

Support expansion of education programs for students and a coordinated, watershed-wide approach, especially at the middle school & high school level.



41 respondents



Caroline Kipps I think this is fine but does not offer immediate actions. In general, I have found many of the younger kids way more woke on the troubles on our beautiful planet than the general adult population.

one month ago

[1 Agree](#)



Important to have these programs at the high school and middle school level to reinforce meaningful watershed educational experience in elementary school. This is a great opportunity to involve students in citizen science.

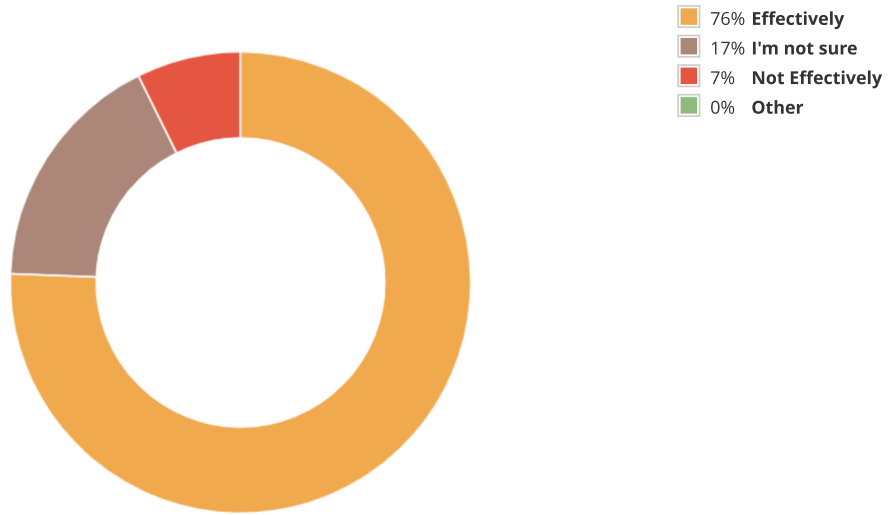
21 days ago



Samantha Provencio This sounds like another way to access funds for stream testing. If the young adults can perform stream quality tests in a "citizen scientist" program the data can be used in collaboration with other (non education based) funded programs.

one month ago

Explore grant opportunities to support stream health restoration, conservation, and education projects and programs.



41 respondents



Be careful to make sure that the administration of the grant doesn't cost more than the grant actually provides. Also make sure any grants include funding for technical assistance and administration.

one month ago



Unless these strategies are implemented in a wider area basis only minimal change with occur.

one month ago



Caroline Kipps Sure! Grants from non-profit organizations or federal and state grants for the success of a county-wide, environmental initiative sounds like a good thing.

one month ago

What else would you like to share with our project team about the Stream Health Initiative Strategies?



Our water is the first water coming off the mountains (unlike in other communities like Richmond). There's no excuse for it not to be pure and clean. I am grateful for this streams initiative.

one month ago

[+ 3 Agree](#)



De Forest Mellon, Jr. I think this initiative is long overdue, but it pleases me greatly. The natural services provided by our once-pristine beautiful county must be appreciated, preserved and reconstituted where possible

one month ago

[+ 2 Agree](#)



Sara M. Robinson All we have to do is look at the water crisis in the West to give us the impetus to be proactive here with the Rivanna and other streams that feed into it.

one month ago

[+ 1 Agree](#)



Caroline Kipps I was just so excited and pleased to find that there is interest and action on this in Albemarle County! Thank you!

one month ago

[+ 1 Agree](#)



Donna Bennett Dear Albemarle County Stream Health Initiative:

We strongly agree with the aspirational goals you have set forth in your vision statement. However, we have concerns about the lack of over-arching philosophy that necessitates a new perspective on what is being protected. We submit that, although watersheds and stream/river health are very valuable concepts, both of themselves and by implication what their impacts are on downstream Chesapeake Bay biology, what is missing from your document is an explicit statement regarding the existence of local watersheds and streams/ivers within the Central Appalachian biome.

As you likely know, biomes include waters, air, land geologies and all life forms. Your goals will benefit the Central Appalachian biome but fail to educate the public about the many ways that watersheds and streams/ivers are both essential components of and contribute to the overall dynamic integration of biome function.

We have extensive background regarding implementation of these goals based on our experience both as upstream landowners on the Virginia State Scenic Moormans River and principle advocates for Friends of the Moormans River (FoMR), a group formed in the late 1990's to address RWSA water management issues.

Our concerns relate specifically to Objective 6/Strategy 6a.

Objective 6. Retain and improve land cover near rivers and streams and protect wetlands. Strategy 6a. Continue to use the Water Protection Ordinance, critical slopes regulations, and other measures to preserve designated river and stream valleys in their natural state, to protect significant resources associated with river and stream valleys, and to provide buffer areas.

Community vision for stream health. Every question in your questionnaire represents an effective and positive way to help promote stream health. However, we question the philosophical starting point of these proposed strategies. We propose to start with a definition and understanding, from a community perspective, as to what a biome is and how the concept of stream health derives from maintaining integrity of a complex, integrated biome. (see above)

This philosophical starting point has not been specified prior to this time, resulting in a missed educational opportunity. As a community, we need to take stock of where past failures have taken place in county protection measures and ask what is needed to correct those failures. All corrective actions relate back to two philosophically important starting points that with two

corrective actions relate back to two philosophically important starting points that with two major hyperlinked concepts—1. Protecting the Central Appalachian Biome—moving west to east; 2. Protecting the entirety of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, from its origins to termination.

The water management and flow issues concerning the Moormans river (MR) have been addressed through the publicly debated water supply planning process. However, increased usage of the North fork (Nf) of the MR and South fork (Sf) of the MR—both inside Albemarle County (AC) and outside AC within the adjacent Shenandoah National Park (SNP)—has degraded over time the riparian systems and introduced new problems for the overall ecological protection of MR health. We would expect AC, at this point in time, to be providing the highest level of protection at locations affecting the ecological health of both water supply and reservoir and the headwaters of a VA State Scenic River. Yet, this area has been ignored and major 'out of sight' trashing within this valuable watershed has resulted.

What can be done to bring about a change in the 'philosophy of protection' of this remote area? We ask this question because, various generic steps recommended in the Initiative already were in place when this extreme overuse and degradation of river corridors took place.

For example, during the recent COVID crisis, we witnessed a substantially increased number of visitors to the Sugar Hollow Reservoir area—sometimes as many as 600 cars per weekend day, which replaced 100-150 cars per weekend day in recent years. The 'parking area' for these cars is located, haphazardly, within forested watershed at the mouth of the SHR, along the banks of the North Fork. The hundreds of visitors then utilized both the Nf and Sf areas as 'Mint Springs' substitutes, as had been occurring for the last ~10 years. This immense overcrowding of a natural area represented the 'unintended consequences' of something that is permitted, although in a restricted way. Hikers are allowed to take a brief dip in the rivers of the SNP or at the far reaches of the watershed above the Sugar Hollow Reservoir along hiking trails that connect the areas. However, in over-use of these areas, people not only are leaving trash in the natural river areas above the Sugar Hollow Dam—they're also denuding with foot traffic the natural river-bank habitats and river beds of the North and South forks of the MR.

Both MR forks originate in the high eastern slopes of the SNP and have been known to Save Our Streams monitors, and others, as treasure troves of species of aquatic insect that are highly intolerant to warm water, chemical pollutants and silt coming in from banks. Those banks now are being destroyed, unintentionally, by hundreds of human feet. People who would not dig up or steal a wildflower are unknowingly eliminating natural vegetation that provides the filtration system and are overturning rocks that provide habitat for aquatic insects.

Another problem is the idea of 'bathroom' facilities—who's doing what where? These natural areas cannot process human waste on such a high scale. What results is a form of pollution affecting both natural habitats and water supply.

Although protective regulations existed, at no time, before or during COVID, has the RWSA possessed the staff to police the area. Even the SNP rangers were/are unable to prevent destruction of rivers within their borders. Also, many other organisms, such as lichen, are being destroyed by rock climbers who do not obey what might philosophically be called the 'velvet rope' concept. In an art museum, velvet ropes prevent visitors from touching, or defiling in any way, beautiful Rembrandt, Monet, or Picasso paintings. People comprehend the meaning of the velvet rope—to symbolically and truly guard the treasure from being 'touched'. When the art museum visitor enters the museum, they are made aware that even finger oils can degrade the surface of a masterpiece. Why don't we communicate a similar concept re: our valuable 'natural areas'? Why don't we have a means of communication that similarly explains that our natural areas deserve the same reverence, respect and protection from degradation?

Within our specific Sugar Hollow/MR location, we tried to address this question of how to bring about a change in the philosophy of protection in the following way: Before COVID, FoMR, met

with Ann Mallek and Lonnie Murray and came up with an idea of first steps to be taken to create a SH Natural Area.

1. The Sugar Hollow land surrounding the SH Reservoir should receive special designation as a natural, preservation area.
2. Vehicle traffic should be restricted starting at the Sugar Hollow Dam—with access beyond that point only by foot or non-powered means.
3. A more formal parking lot should be constructed (or expanded—some construction has occurred because of recent dam repairs) in the area east and below the former site of the dam keeper's house.
4. The new Sugar Hollow parking area should contain an extensive educational kiosk.
5. The new parking area should contain restrooms, such as portable toilet facilities.

Most important in this concept is the educational kiosk created to inform the public, in an engaging way, about the value of the land adjacent to the 'SNP Central Appalachian Biome', where some sense of 'velvet rope' awareness for this specific natural area is engendered.

The description provided by the SNP to the public of what it represents says it all:

"Encompassing more than 300 square miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah National Park protects an abundance of native and globally rare animal and plant populations, habitats, migratory bird populations, and the endangered Shenandoah salamander, which lives nowhere else in the world. As one of the largest preserved areas in the Mid-Atlantic region, the park provides an ideal place for scientific research and understanding of the Central Appalachian Biome.

Shenandoah National Park showcases the geology and high elevation hydrology of the Appalachians, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. The high elevation ecosystems and headwaters preserved in the park help contribute to the ecological integrity of valuable cold-water resources downstream. All headwater streams in the park flow to the Chesapeake Bay."

The designated Sugar Hollow/Moormans River Natural Area shares with the SNP the same geological and ecological features. These two natural preservation areas enhance each other—in a form of mutual protection of the continuous, surrounding environment. The MR corridor functions to expand the viability of SNP forest systems—while the SNP helps protect the headwaters of the State Scenic MR.

How we communicate the value of our own regional biome represents a challenging problem in itself. Starting an educational effort where the protected biome can be experienced will go a long way in promoting a higher level of ecological awareness throughout AC.

Sincerely,
Donna and Jim Bennett

12 days ago



I'd like to see action on some other strategies not considered as part of this process. Is the county doing anything about failing or unmaintained septic systems? Septic systems are the dominant mode of management for "humanure" (human excrement) in the rural area, but I didn't see any discussion of this in these strategies. And septic systems are not really the most appropriate solution anyway; there are better options. Read "The Humanure Handbook" by Joseph Jenkins, or "Pipe Dreams" by Chelsea Wald.

18 days ago



Zach Perkins It is very exciting to see Albemarle County commit to protecting local streams! If interested, the Band lab group at the UVA Department of Environmental Sciences would be interested in collaboration with this project. Particularly in regards to monitoring design and data analysis.

20 days ago

I appreciate the thoughtful approach to public engagement. I have learned a lot from the Community Learning Series! We only have to witness our rivers and streams full of silt and mud after a rain event to see the impact we are making on them. Everyone can play a role in protecting stream health. These strategies strive for a good balance of education, incentives, and enforcement of rules.

21 days ago

A lot of "i'm not sure answers" probably because so much of this is greek. The questions should have more in-depth explanations first, then after establishing a common understanding of terms and issues, then ask the question.

29 days ago

Brian Scruby Environmental issues have always been of great concern to me, and I have supported many environmental causes in my lifetime. I have also been a cattle farmer for most of my life. I do support the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the goal of restoring the health of the bay. However, I do not support many of the tactics that are being used in trying to achieve what I acknowledge are worthwhile goals. While I am very supportive of VOLUNTARY livestock stream exclusion projects, I do not support mandatory stream exclusion for all livestock farms because this is just not practical on many farms. I also think there are major downsides to livestock stream exclusion. People are forgetting that bison and elk once roamed our countryside in large numbers and they definitely played a role in the historic riparian ecosystems which fed the Chesapeake Bay not that long ago. From observing the behavior of cattle over my lifetime, I find that they play a very positive role in maintaining a healthy riparian environment (when they are not overstocked beyond what the land can handle) which allows other native species to derive maximum benefit from these riparian areas. How is a Green Heron or a Great Blue Heron or a Kingfisher going to get to the stream for food if we fence it off and allow the vegetation to get so dense as to cut off their access? Cattle are now filling the important ecological niche of the "large animal" which makes the paths through the brush and vegetation so that other animals have access to the water, a role once played by bison and elk. When it comes to bacteria, they are there naturally in the water thanks to other wildlife. I do believe that cattle sometimes add to the bacterial counts of the water, but the aquatic organisms have ways of utilizing the bacteria. Some of the posts I have read here are ignoring the fact that bacteria are a natural part of what is in the streams anyway. I strongly support your idea of water testing programs being made available, voluntarily, to interested landowners. I think it would also be very worthwhile to do water testing studies on what our urban reservoirs are discharging to send on to localities downstream and ultimately to the Chesapeake Bay, and these studies should be published and made available to the public. Education programs are worthwhile too. Please remember that farmers are stakeholders, and due to the very labor intensive and time consuming nature of our livelihood it is often hard to participate in processes like this. Probably the thing I most disagree with in your ideas is the notion of creating some sort of enforcement capability. But I like the idea of educating people about what is harmful to the health of our streams. Also remember that the notion of "Conservation" includes the concept of "wise use." I believe it is possible to use and enjoy our streams in a careful way and at the same time preserve their health. I do not believe that if you see a cow standing in the water somewhere that that is necessarily a bad thing at all. It depends a lot on how the livestock are managed. If children are being taught that a cow standing in the water is a bad thing, then we are not teaching them to look at the big picture. Please also consider what farmers are currently faced with - things like the loss of our native ash trees due to the emerald ash borer. I could show you entire groves of trees in our local forests that are gone almost in the blink of an eye! Most of the elm tree on our farm have also disappeared in the last couple of decades, probably due to Dutch Elm Disease, but I don't know for sure if that's what got them because there are a few that still survive. And our sycamore trees which are all over the farm seem to be unhealthy - I am told that is due to anthracnose fungus and climate change. Climate change also seems to be facilitating a more invasive tendency from certain types of plants that didn't even seem to be evident here twenty years ago. When I bush hog pastures at my farm, I am very mindful of native species of wildflowers that we want to encourage in the pastures, including some that are scarce, and I leave them alone to grow. In conclusion, please don't cause me to have to sell my farm by implementing mandatory livestock stream exclusion.

one month ago

Bison and Elk did not spend much time in riparian areas due to pressure from the predators (wolves and mountain lions) that were part of that same ecosystem. A good example of this can be seen in Yellowstone National Park where wolves were reintroduced. Following their reintroduction the vegetation in riparian areas in the Park was reestablished as elk no longer would spend extended periods grazing in them. Cattle are not the problem with water quality it's the livestock producers who won't or can't manage them properly to protect and enhance the vegetation in the riparian areas and the uplands. I support a voluntary approach however when a stream is being impacted by poor grazing or farming practices the farm operator should be given a chance (with currently available technical and financial assistance programs) to improve their management to a level that will eliminate the impact on the surface waters. If the farm operator does not address the problem they are causing then an enforcement approach may be necessary.

28 days ago

1 Agree

j. sitler Expand working with local environmental groups by forming cooperatives such as the Rivanna Stormwater Education Program (RSEP).

one month ago

non landowners, suburban and urban people are always willing to have the rural landowners pay for their whims and wishes. Albemarle county needs to decide if it wants to retain any agricultural land, scenic big farms, etc. or go on down the route of becoming like Fairfax county. As it stands right now, which county's way of living is most harmful to the water quality? What affects water quality more, a few cows standing in the creek or a few hundred cars sitting on an impermeable parking lot in front of an apartment complex?

one month ago

Have you been involved in creating the Stream Health Initiative Vision, Goals, and/or Strategies?

43%	No	13 ✓
40%	Yes - I completed the Discover and/or Define questionnaire	12 ✓
20%	Yes - I attended a Community Learning Series event	6 ✓
13%	Yes - I participated in another way	4 ✓
7%	Yes - I participated in the Stakeholder Workgroup	2 ✓

30 Respondents

Let's stay in touch! Please complete the following if you want to stay informed about participation opportunities and project updates.

No data to display...