



November 8, 2021

Stream Health Initiative Project Update Phase II – Rural Area

Project Overview

In 2017, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors directed County staff to develop strategies for improving stream health in the county; this project is referred to as the Stream Health Initiative.

Phase I (2018-present) focused on development-related issues and strategies for improving stream health and resulted in development of thirteen specific proposals. Work on a subset of these proposals is ongoing; others are phased due to staff resource needs.

Phase II of the project has a Rural Area focus. The goal of Phase II is to develop strategies for improving stream health that are supported by the communities, landowners, and organizations that live and work in the Rural Area, using a collaborative and inclusive process. Phase II project updates were provided to the Board on November 18, 2020, April 7, 2021, and July 21, 2021.

The Phase II public engagement process, underway since January 2021, resulted in the development of 16 recommended strategies presented to the Board during a work session on July 21, 2021. During the work session, the Board expressed support for some of the strategies and directed staff to conduct further research and develop proposals.

Staff are returning now to the Board with fourteen proposals that were developed based on the strategies, staff analysis, community feedback, and input from the Board.

Timeline and Approach

The timeline for Phase II of the project is comprised of four quarterly stages in 2021. The following overview provides a brief description of each stage; the [Stream Health Initiative Public Input site](#) provides additional detail. This approach is intended to be agile and overlap among the tools and activities employed in each stage is expected.

- *Planning and Material Development - Sept-Dec 2020* – This stage focused on research, preparation, and development of engagement tools and resources.
- *Discover - Jan-March 2021* – The goal of this stage was to build a shared understanding of current conditions and challenges related to improving stream health in the Rural Areas, with opportunities for sharing expertise, knowledge, and experience through an online questionnaire, educational webinars, and facilitated conversations.
- *Define - April-June 2021* – This stage involved identifying constraints, alignment among stakeholders, challenges, and opportunities. Initial concepts were explored and strategies developed, with staff working in collaboration with a stakeholder work group.
- *Develop - July-Sept 2021* – The focus of this stage was review of selected strategies and development of proposals, both internally and by stakeholders. This included presentations and discussions with community groups, boards and committees, as well as a work session with the Board.
- *Decide - Oct-Dec 2021* – Final proposals have been developed and a recommendation will be presented to the Board. Implementation of selected strategies will extend beyond this timeframe.

Progress To-Date

The following summary describes key elements of progress and public engagement activities during the *Develop* stage of the project (July-Sept 2021). Detailed descriptions of the previous stages of the project were provided in the [April 7, 2021](#) and [July 21, 2021](#) project updates.

Develop – July-Sept 2021

- Sixteen [strategies for improving stream health](#) in the Rural Area were presented to the Board in a work session on July 21, 2021, falling into three categories: i) Regulatory, ii) Incentives and Voluntary Opportunities, and iii) Monitoring, Education, and Partnerships. The Board expressed support for some of the strategies and directed staff to continue with research and analysis and develop proposals.
- Staff solicited feedback from the broader community on the strategies through the project’s third public input questionnaire, open from August 18-September 8, titled the “Develop Questionnaire.” The full results of the Develop Questionnaire are provided here as Attachment C.
- Active collaboration with technical experts from partner organizations and stakeholder groups occurred during this stage of the project through smaller, focused conversations designed to explore topics in more detail, and to better understand potential constraints, outcomes, and impacts. Through focused discussions, feedback was received from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD), the Albemarle County Farm Bureau, Rivanna Conservation Alliance (RCA), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), the Albemarle Natural Heritage Committee (NHC), and the Stream Health Initiative Work Group.
- Presentations about the Stream Health Initiative project and strategies were also delivered to the Planning Commission (PC), Albemarle County Easement Authority (ACEA), Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee (LUEPC), and the Cville 100. Following each presentation, feedback was received from each of these groups through Q&A, discussions, and follow up correspondence.
- Utilizing the feedback and input from stakeholders and the broader community on the sixteen strategies, staff developed fourteen proposals for improving stream health in the Rural Area. A detailed analysis of each proposal is included as Attachment B.
- At the Board’s direction, staff also researched full adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA). Some elements of the CBPA would likely contribute to improving stream health; however, the analysis showed that approximately 60% of the provisions are already included in the County’s ordinances, and full adoption was determined to be a resource and time intensive option. In addition, the programs and projects described in the fourteen selected proposals provide additional benefits for stream health and co-benefits for climate and biodiversity, many of which are not addressed by the CBPA. As a result, full adoption is not recommended at this time. However, the analysis revealed opportunities for updating and strengthening our ordinances to better align with the CBPA, and to learn from model ordinances in other localities. Proposals 1, 2, 4, and 11 all include elements of the CBPA and/or opportunities to build on what was learned from the CBPA analysis.

Next Steps

The focus of the *Decide* stage (Oct-Dec) is finalization and public review of the final proposals. The Stream Health Team will work internally with other staff to continue analyzing staff capacity, budgets, equity impacts, and project timelines, and will receive direction from the Board. Beginning in January of 2022, Phase I (Development Focus) and Phase II (Rural Area) will be combined and proposals will advance to public hearings and implementation, as recommended.