



March 24, 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 has focused on development-related issues and strategies for improving stream health. Thirteen specific proposals were developed, some of which will be going to the board on April 21 for a public hearing with an effective date of July 1; work on others is ongoing.

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.

### Timeline and Approach

The timeline for Phase II of the project includes four quarterly stages of the project in 2021. A fifth stage of the project, Planning and Material Development, occurred in Sept-Dec of 2020. 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 timeframe focused on research, preparation, and development of engagement tools and resources.
- Stage 1 – 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.
- Stage 2 – Define – April-June 2021 - Stage 2 will involve identifying constraints, alignment among stakeholders, challenges, and opportunities. Initial concepts will be developed into proposals, with staff working in collaboration with a stakeholder work group.
- Stage 3 - Develop – July-Sept 2021 - The focus of this stage is development and review of final proposals, both internally and by stakeholders. A joint work session with the BOS/PC is planned.
- Stage 4: Decide – Oct-Dec 2021 - Final proposals will be presented to the BOS. 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 *Planning and Material Development* and *Discover* stages of the project.

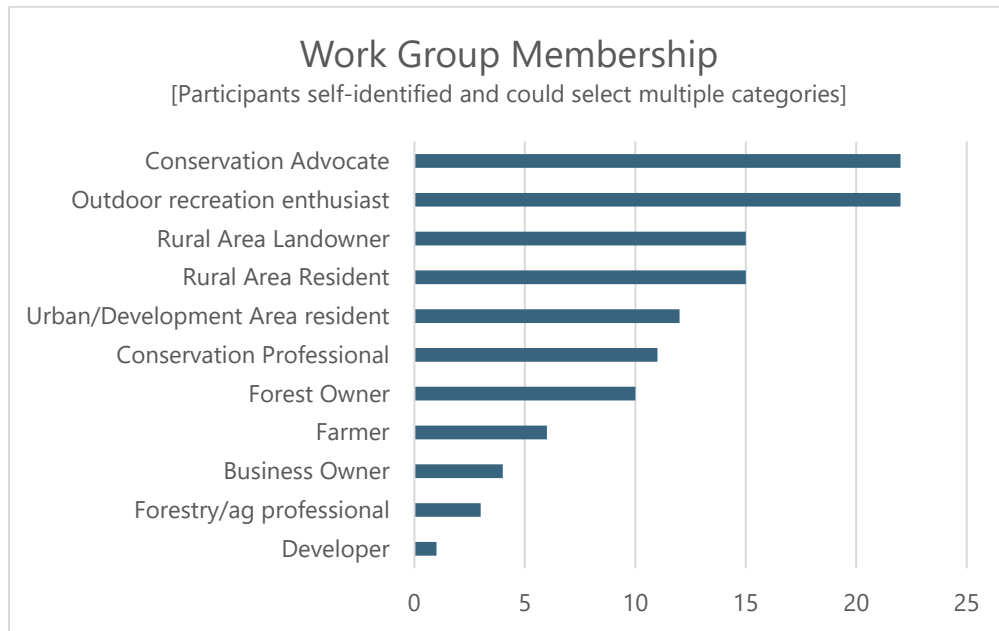
### Planning and Material Development - Sept-Dec 2020

- A multi-disciplinary staff team was assembled, comprised of nine staff members from the Community Development, Facilities and Environmental Services, and Communications and Public Engagement departments.
- A [Stream Health section](#) on Albemarle County's new website was created with a dual purpose:
  - 1) To work towards addressing Proposals 12 and 13 from Phase I of the Stream Health Initiative:
    - Proposal 12 - Develop educational material and conduct public outreach.
      - A. Explain the rules and regulations regarding stream health and stream buffers. Provide clarity.
      - B. Explain why stream buffers are important.
    - Proposal 13 - Provide support and coordinate with other organizations and landowners to facilitate activities and projects that will improve stream health.
  - 2) To provide a common baseline of information about local stream health for all Stream Health Initiative participants; and to direct Albemarle County website visitors to the [Stream Health Initiative Public Input site](#).
- A [Stream Health Initiative Public Input site](#) was created to help connect County residents to current information and engagement opportunities. Contents include the purpose of the project, timeline, engagement goals, reference materials, and contact information. Links to videos, meeting recordings, questionnaires, and upcoming events are also available.
- A video entitled 'Introduction to Stream Health' was created to share information about the benefits of healthy streams, the current conditions of our waterways, and to encourage public participation in the project.
- The Discover Questionnaire was developed in order to learn more about the participants and their interests, knowledge, and expertise. It was also designed to encourage participants to choose a role of Observer, Contributor, Ambassador, Technical Expert, and/or Workgroup Member.
- A flyer about the project was developed for distribution throughout the Rural Area, to help encourage participation by residents who might not be connected digitally.

### Stage I – Discover - Jan-March 2021

- The Discover Questionnaire was released in January and remained open through the end of March; there were 230 responses as of the time of writing this report. The questionnaire and public input site were announced through the Albemarle County News (ACN), website banner, and social media. County Staff also reached out directly to key stakeholder contacts and numerous community organizations throughout the County to help spread the word.
- Flyers were distributed through four methods:
  1. Through the course of their regular duties engaging with local businesses, County Ambassadors distributed flyers to 117 businesses around the County.
  2. In collaboration with Albemarle County Parks and Recreation staff, weatherproof flyer boxes were set out in five County Parks and additional flyers were posted to kiosks where possible.
  3. 300 additional flyers were distributed during the Yancey mask giveaway.
  4. Participants who volunteered to be Stream Health Ambassadors were provided the digital flyer and asked to share with their networks.
- Two Stream Health Community Kickoff meetings (evening and lunch hour) were held in January to help orient the public to stream health information, the project, and engagement opportunities.
- In response to early results of the Discover Questionnaire indicating low involvement of Rural Area residents, landowners, farmers, and forest owners, a postcard was designed to help reach these key demographics directly. Postcards were mailed to 2700 Rural Area residents whose parcels intersected a Water Protection Ordinance buffer and/or were identified as agricultural or forestal use. This measure resulted in a significant uptick in Questionnaire responses, phone calls, and requests for print materials from those with poor internet connectivity.

- A [Community Learning Series](#) was designed consisting of seven lunch webinars from February 26 – April 9. Topics were identified to help address Proposals 12 and 13 of Phase I (described above) and based on topics of interest identified by participants in the Discover Questionnaire. County staff and technical experts from other organizations were invited to share their knowledge and expertise and answer questions from the community.
- Forty people volunteered to participate in the Work Group. The purpose of the Work Group is to provide diverse perspectives and expertise to advise County staff in developing proposals for improving stream health in the Rural Area. Membership includes representation from various organizations, stakeholder groups, and community members with expertise and/or interest in improving stream health.



### Work Group and Technical Expert Representation

Albemarle County Farm Bureau	Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority
Albemarle Garden Club	River Run Property Owners Association
Botanical Garden of the Piedmont	Sierra Club
Chesapeake Bay Foundation Clean Water Captains	Southern Environmental Law Center
County of Albemarle	Stantec
Cville 100	The Nature Conservancy (member)
Environmental Timber Management, LLC	Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (retired, Board)
Green Infrastructure Center	UVA Foundation
Natural Heritage Committee	Virginia Association for Environmental Education
North American Association for Environmental Education	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	White Hall Hunt Club
Pantops Community Advisory Committee	White Hall Ruritans
Piedmont Environmental Council	Wild Ginger Field Services
Rivanna Conservation Alliance	Willoughby Property Owner Association
Rivanna Trail Foundation (member)	

- The first Work Group meeting was held March 11 via Zoom. The focus of the meeting was getting to know the participants, defining the long-term vision and goals for stream health, and identifying priority focus areas for the project work.

## Next Steps

In the upcoming stages of the project, the focus will be on identifying constraints, alignment among stakeholders, challenges, and opportunities. We will begin to explore concepts and develop draft proposals for improving stream health in the Rural Area. County staff will continue to collaborate with the stakeholder Work Group and receive feedback from the general public. The Community Learning Series will continue through April 9<sup>th</sup> and recordings will be available via the public input website. The Stream Health Initiative Team will continue to update the website and public input site with new information and resources as they are developed.



## THE STREAM HEALTH INITIATIVE

# Community Learning Series



Videos posted after each event at [publicinput.com/streamhealth](https://publicinput.com/streamhealth)

**FRIDAYS FROM 12 - 1 PM VIA ZOOM**

*Feb. 26 through Apr. 9*

**ALBEMARLE-ORG.ZOOM.US/J/99135178773**

**DIAL: 301-715-8592 OR 833-548-0276 (TOLL FREE)**

### **2/26**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE RURAL AREA**

*Learn about the characteristics of Albemarle County's Rural Area, including current land and water use. This session will also explore how past changes to the landscape and to waterways can be reflected in current stream conditions.*

### **3/5**

#### **LOCAL WATER SUPPLY & SOURCE WATER PROTECTION**

*Representatives from the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) will share information about our local water supplies and planning for future demands.*

### **3/12**

#### **WATER PROTECTION POLICIES & PROGRAMS**

*Albemarle County's Chief of Environmental Services and County Engineer will talk about mandated and voluntary County water protection policies and programs.*

### **3/19**

#### **STREAM ECOLOGY AND MONITORING**

*Technical experts from Rivanna Conservation Alliance and DEQ will talk about water quality monitoring efforts and the current conditions of our waterways in Albemarle County.*

### **3/26**

#### **HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS (HOAs) & STREAM HEALTH**

*HOAs can have an important role to play in creating common spaces that benefit the greater good in local communities. Join us to hear from the Piedmont Environmental Council on how sustainable landscaping and management of common spaces can help improve watershed health, water quality, and wildlife habitat.*

### **4/2**

#### **LANDOWNER OPPORTUNITIES: COST-SHARE & CONSERVATION PROGRAMS**

*Join technical experts from the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD) and Albemarle County to learn about Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stream protection and types of financial assistance available to help residential, agricultural, and forestal landowners implement BMPs and other conservation practices on their land.*

### **4/9**

#### **STREAM RESTORATION 101**

*What is stream restoration? What does a stream restoration project look like? Learn from technical experts and hear about successful stream restoration projects in Albemarle County.*

Learn more about the Stream Health Initiative and join the conversation at [publicinput.com/streamhealth](https://publicinput.com/streamhealth)