

CRATER PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

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Crater PDC Environmental Resource Management Task Force

FY22 CZM & FY23 WIP Phase III

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

1:00pm to 3:00pm

Virtual Meeting & Training

MEETING MINUTES

In attendance (18): Angela Blount (Prince George County); Marianne Pitts (Chesterfield County); Kelly Davis, Stephen Edwards (City of Hopewell); Michael Rae, Matthew Culbreath (City of Emporia); Darryl E. Walker, Reginald Tabor (City of Petersburg); Beverly Walkup, Lorenzo Turner, Michael Poarch (Sussex County); Robert Wilson (ARWA); Gabi Kinney (Wetlands Watch); **Tyler Meader** (DCR); Mary Jacobs (DEQ); **Luke Peters**, Lindsay Edwards, Nadya Syazsa (Berkley Group);

Meeting Summary:

The April meeting of the Environmental Resource Management Task Force (ERMTF), including a training from Tyler Meader of DCR's Natural Heritage team on the Natural Heritage Data Explorer (NHDE), as well as an overview of available grants and funding opportunities. The meeting ended with a roundtable discussion amongst the ERMTF members.

Welcome/Regional News and Updates – Luke Peters

- Discussed updates to the Rappahannock River Basin Commission concerning their report on utility-scale solar – outside the Crater region, but will be important for sending ideas to the legislature.
- Urban and Community Forestry Grant – \$MMs for planting trees
- REAP grants and cost share programs – rural electrification, renewable energy, and efficiency retrofits
- Localities should start thinking about how to collaborate with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for future EPA grant funds
 - EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government grant as an example – requires subaward to CBO for outreach and to grow partnership
 - JRA and FOLAR for James/Appomattox, but should think about growing partnerships in Sussex, Greensville, Emporia, etc.

DCR's Natural Heritage Data Explorer (NHDE) – Tyler Meader, DCR

- Link to NHDE: <https://vanhde.org/>
- Next 2 hour virtual training for NHDE – **Wednesday, May 24, 1-3pm**
- All localities in Crater PDC have access to the NHDE (except for Sussex Co.), although they are mostly outdated
- **5 sections of DNH**
 - Inventory
 - Information management
 - Development a variety public, map-based, statewide conservation planning tools
 - Natural Area Protection
 - Currently there are 66 natura areas are preserved – 59,658 acres
 - Natural area stewardship
 - Manage the preserve system to restore, enhance, and protect natural heritage resources
 - Environmental review
 - Project review - ~3,000 projects a year
 - Locality liaison – Tyler Meader (focused on Virginia's coastal communities)
- Element occurrences (EO's)
 - EO's = Area of land/or water in which a species or natural community is, or was, present
 - EO's are ranked to estimate viability based on landscape context, population size, and condition
 - EO's of a high enough rank are the building blocks for conservation sites and stream conservation units (SCU's)
 - In Crater PDC:
 - 187 conservation sites
 - Significant natural communities (examples in CPDC):
 - Tidal oligohaline march
 - Wind tidal tupelo-bald cypress swamp
 - DNH tracks **532** G1 and G2 species and communities:


Mabee's salamander (<i>Ambystoma mabeei</i> , G4/S1S2/NL/LT)	American Blue-hearts (<i>Buchnera americana</i> , G5?/S1S2/NL/NL)
	
Global rarity rank/State rarity rank /Federal legal status/State legal status	
G1 or S1 = Critically Imperiled	NL= Not Listed
G2 or S2 = Imperiled	LE = Listed Endangered
G3 or S3 = Vulnerable	LT = Listed Threatened
G4 or S4 = Apparently Secure	PE = Proposed Endangered
G5 or S5 = Secure	PT = Proposed Threatened

- 313 plants and animals, 219 communities
- Not all species have legal protection, but only protecting listed species could lead to local extinction. For instance, the Big Levels Salamander’s global population lies within one conservation site in Virginia (although not in Crater)
- 107 of non-listed G1-G2 species are known from only 2-3 locations

- Conservation sites

- Boundaries – include full extent of known NH resources and can include:
 - Adjacent associated habitat
 - Buffer from adjacent disturbance, predation, or invasive species
 - Additional land may be necessary for effective stewardship

Conservation Sites



- Defined area of land that encloses:
 - One or more natural heritage resources, and
 - The surrounding habitat or buffer necessary to protect the resources
- We have 5 types of conservation sites in Virginia:
 - "terrestrial conservation sites" which includes lands with non-aquatic, above-ground EOs
 - "karst conservation sites" which includes lands with EOs associated with caves and karst
 - "stream conservation units" or SCUs that designate stream reaches with aquatic Eos
 - "migratory animal conservation sites"
 - "anthropogenic habitat zones"
- Represent land that should be considered for protection of the natural heritage resources.
 - Do NOT represent protected lands

- Uses of data

- Screening projects
- Local regional planning
- Targets for acquisitions and easements
- Guide priorities of restoration activities

- Stream Conservation Units (SCUs) are stream reaches that contain aquatic NH resources 2 miles upstream and 1 mile downstream of documented occurrences, as well as all tributaries within this reach.

		← Rarity							
ELEMENT OCCURRENCE RANKS		G1	G2	G3	G4/S1	G5/S1	G4 or G5 S2	G4 or G5 S3	ANY
Q u a l i t y	A	B1	B2	B2	B4	B4	B4	B5	B3**
	4 OR MORE w/ A RANK	B1	B1	B2 *	B3	B3	B4	B4	B2
	B	B2	B2	B3	B4	B4	B5	B5	B4
	4 OR MORE w/ B RANK	B1	B1	B2	B3	B3	B4	B5	B3
	C	B2	B3	B4	B5	B5	B5		B5
	4 OR MORE w/ C RANK	B2 *	B2	B3 *	B5 =	B5	B5		
	D	B2	B3	B5	B5***	B5***	B5***		

COMMUNITY
Note: many communities now have G-Ranks

- Coastal VA ecological value assessment (VEVA)
 - **Luke Peters (BG):** *How is it different from the DNH?*
 - Incorporates some of the conservation site from DCR
 - Complimentary layer to add into the DNH – there are some redundancies in data.
 - Nick Meade can help describe differences between them.
- **Virginia Wetlands Catalog (VWC)**
 - Very detailed wetlands inventory of the state which is not in the NHDE.

- **ConserveVirginia 3.0**

- Statewide land conservation strategy and based on data driven process for identifying VA’s highest priority lands for protection
- 24 layers – consolidated into 7 categories
 - Natural habitat and ecosystem diversity
 - Agriculture and forestry
 - Cultural and Historic Preservation
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience
 - Floodplains and flooding resilience
 - Scenic preservation
 - Water Quality Improvement

Coastal Virginia Ecological Value Assessment (VEVA)

- Geospatial tool for ranking terrestrial and aquatic areas for ecological value
- Developed by DEQ-Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program
- Useful within the VA coastal zone to prioritize areas for preservation





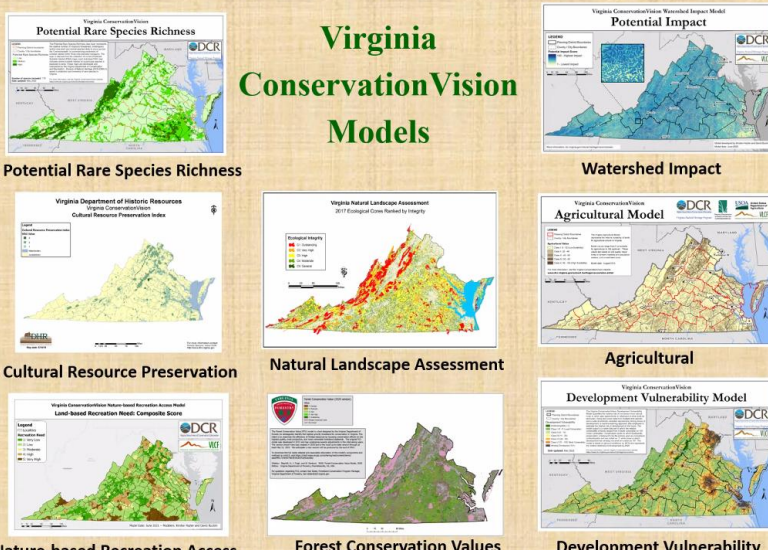

- **Potential rare species richness layer**

- Available to the public
- Categorizes 5km hexagons into low-medium-high
- Based on number of predicted suitable habitat layers within each hexagon

- **VA ConservationVision Models**

- Many of the same layers as ConserveVirginia, but that can also help with long-term planning.
- Integrated serve as a flexible tool to identify green infrastructure according to the needs and strategies of different conservation interest
- Included under NHDE – not its own header but under Conservation Planning
- *ConserveVirginia vs. ConservationVision?*
 - If a locality was to review a

Virginia ConservationVision Models



plan, they should refer to **both**. ConserveVirginia will be used for scoring certain grants, but both will be useful.

- **Managed Conservation Lands Layer**

- Accounting the management of all existing conservation lands in Virginia, including data from land trusts and others.

- **New: Wildlife Corridor Action Plan**

- Nexus areas are 25-mile hexagons where corridor conservation could help prevent accidents.
- Meant to ensure driver safety
- Helps identify highest areas of vehicle-wildlife conflict
- I-64 fencing is a pilot project to prevent deer crossing at the most dangerous spots.

- **DCR-DNH Screening Process**



- **Locality Assistance Program**

- www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/localityliaison

- Project review and siting
- Comprehensive planning
- Zoning amendments
- Open space and green infrastructure planning

- For-profit companies are charged a fee for project review, but local governments are not.

- Each of the layer within the NHDE are equipped with its own description to guide users in understanding which would be best suited to their needs

DCR-DNH Screening Process	What will our letter say?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receipt of project (through NHDE or submittal of Information Services Order Form on-line)• The project boundaries are digitized in ArcGIS environmental review project layer• A 100 ft buffer is created from the digitized project boundaries• The buffered project site is checked against the documented natural heritage resources layer• In addition, the non-buffered project site is checked against the predicted suitable habitat (PSH) layers• If an intersect occurs, DCR-DNH staff evaluates potential adverse impact from the proposed project and makes recommendations when appropriate• DCR staff may also comment on potential habitat in areas that have not been inventoried for natural heritage resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "No Comment"-no natural heritage resources or suitable habitat for resources documented within project area (this may include karst protection recommendations)• "No Impact"- no adverse impact expected to natural heritage resources documented within the project area• Identify species that have potential to be adversely impacted and provide recommendations to avoid adverse impact to natural heritage resources• For state and federal listed species, we will recommend coordination with the appropriate agency or agencies –USFWS-Federal, VDWR-state listed animals, VDACS state listed plants and insects• MOA with VDACS statement in reference to initial screening for stated listed plants and insects• Disclaimer that the absence of any natural heritage resources may indicate the site has not been surveyed• Recommend updating information if the project changes and/or 6 months has passed• Comment on potential impacts to Ecological Cores 

- User guide to NHDE website is 79 pages of detailed info: www.vanhde.org/help

- Training on May 24th will show how to submit projects, upload shapefiles, etc.

Roundtable Discussion

- Embedding conservation practices into regulatory tools in relation to development – into zoning amendment, comprehensive plans, etc.
- What layers can localities use in their ordinances?
 - DCR is non-regulatory
 - James City County has some strict language about where they'll allow development based on conservation site value.
 - Localities can write whatever they want in their ordinances.
 - For solar, localities requiring that people comply with Pollinator Smart program, native plants in the buffers, etc.
- Start thinking about projects to enter into the new CRMP Phase II database – which would be crucial into getting funding for projects (e.g., CFPF)
 - Highlight needs in the PDC in relation to flooding issues
- Comprehensive grant database update
 - Grants are announced – with shorter amount of time to apply
 - On the lookout for potential grants that might open soon – particularly those for localities not on the coastal/Bay areas.
- Kelly Davis (Hopewell): Do CFPF require an approved resilience plan?
 - Yes, though this applies only for project-related funding; it is not required for planning efforts
 - Hopewell's resilience plan was **not approved** in the past, with lack of comments from DCR – if other localities could send her an approved plan as example
 - Beverly Walkup (Sussex Co) – the new Crater PDC Hazard Mitigation Plan can be used as basis of the resilience plan
 - Darryl Walker (Petersburg) – the City created a makeshift Resilience Plan using the HMP as the basis for its components, will send to Hopewell and BG
 - Crater PDC will assist in making plan; has rough draft of resilience plan for the region.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

The next ERMTF meeting is set for **May 24, 2023**