

ROANOKE RIVER BASIN REGIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes
March 2, 2001
Claudine's Restaurant
Rich Square, NC

The chairman, Jerry Holloman, called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Members of Council present for the meeting were as follows:

Michael Taylor
James Early
Alex McLennan
Jerry Coker
Jerry Holloman
Kay Winn

Staff members present for the meeting were Joan Giordano and Callie Dobson. The secretary determined that a quorum existed for the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as mailed, following a motion by Jerry Coker, seconded by James Early.

The purpose of the meeting was for Callie Dobson to bring Council up-to-date on the progress of the Basinwide Water Quality Plan. Draft copies of the plan were distributed to members for examination.

Public meetings for comment have been held throughout the basin, with about 35 people at the Windsor meeting, 20 at Weldon, 20 at Roxboro, and 15 at Eden (that meeting had to be postponed due to snow.) The Eden meeting did have the most local government participation, however.

Discussions at the meetings were termed "good" – most especially the Windsor meeting.

The comment period expires April 6. Changes in the way use support ratings are done caused an extension in the comment period. The Roanoke is the first to use the new method of use support rating.

In the past, monitoring was done and a rating for the stream given on one parameter, such as Aquatic Life/Benthic Macroinvertebrates. Now, the monitoring is done and a rating given for each of the five use categories. Different tributaries may have up to four uses in the Roanoke – aquatic life, fish consumption, primary recreation, and water supply. The fifth category, shellfish harvesting waters, does not exist in the Roanoke.

There are four potential ratings: Fully Supporting (FS), Partially Supporting (PS), Not Supporting (NS) and Not Rated (NR). PS and NS are "impaired" waters. FS waters may

not be all okay, as impacts may be noted but not sufficiently to downgrade to impaired status. Usually this is brought about by an impact in aquatic life.

Page 60 in the plan shows the impaired waters in the Lower Roanoke. Other than fish consumption advisories, the entire basin that has been monitored has not been rated.

Joan Giordano asked if the state shuts down the lab due to budget constraints, how would we evaluate water quality? Callie responded that the ratings are set for five years for purposes of the plan. Monitoring is required at least quarterly by EPA for funding purposes. There may be a scaling back on number of sites, frequency of sampling, etc., but minimal standards must be met for federal funding.

Callie then gave an outline of the monitoring stations and their locations. We have good biological data collected, but Council realized through discussion that no set of criteria has been established for evaluation of swampwaters. It is important to be sure that accurate ratings are made so that waters do not get listed as “impaired,” thus triggering an eight-year-long process involved in the 303(d) listing and TMDL process.

Council noted that in Chapter 4, p. 72 of the plan, mention is made of extension evaluative “draft swamp criteria.” Virtually the entire lower basin is Not Rated due simply to a lack of these criteria. Council decided that it would be a good idea to look at this draft, before deciding upon whether or not to ask that these criteria be released in time to include them in the plan for this five-year cycle.

Jerry Holloman suggested that Council might want to go on record expressing concern that 2 cycles of the plan have been entered into without criteria. Jerry Coker expressed the idea that it wouldn't be good to ask for their release if they aren't really ready. Council agreed to invite someone from the Environmental Services office to make presentation at its next meeting. Joan Giordano suggested inviting Jimmie Overton, Branch Director of Environmental Sciences to present the draft criteria referenced on page 72 of the plan. Council asked her to issue the invitation to Mr. Overton.

*All are asked to review Chapter 4 of the plan in preparation for that meeting.

Callie also informed Council that the study conducted by Dominion Power pursuant to its 401 certification for relicensing has been rejected for a new, more comprehensive look at DO. Cumulative low DO in the lower Roanoke is the concern.

Questions included Jerry Holloman's concern over information on low DO in the plan. Callie responded that the interpretation of USGS data would be included in the final plan.

Kay Winn asked about the concern over sloughing of riverbank mentioned in Callie's presentation. Callie noted that there are several sites of concern. Council has already addressed two: the demo project site and Caledonia Prison Farm. Progress at Caledonia is pretty much dependent upon funding from now forward. Almost everything has been implemented but the permanent fencing. Jerry Holloman informed Council that the

money has been approved, but has not yet been released, through the partnership with Fish and Wildlife Service.

Callie is supposed to go to Caledonia before the end of April. Council asked for the opportunity to go along, and Callie offered to set that up as a joint trip.

Other eroding streambanks of note are at the Alamac Knits facility, which is closed but still permitted. They contend that the hurricane caused the problem. The Civil War park at Henry Winslow's is also a problem. Alex McLennan noted that an elderly neighbor claimed that the banks didn't erode like this before the dams.

Callie went on to outline several areas of concern throughout the basin for different reasons. Some in particular were located in Martin County. She is attempting to set up some meetings with the non-point people there to see how much landowner involvement can be generated. Jerry Holloman noted that the stations in the plan said to be in Martin are actually in Bertie, since the entire river is in Bertie. Between Northampton and Halifax, the entire river is in Northampton.

Council asked Callie how the fish consumption advisories are reassessed. Jerry Coker noted that Weyerhaeuser submits fish tissue data to the health department yearly. Callie informed Council that the advisories can change at any time, but the ratings are set in place for purposes of the plan for five years.

The ethanol plant planned for Radio Island has been abandoned, but DFI plans to concentrate on the facility near Jamesville. Barges will not be used, however.

Again, Callie noted that the deadline for comments on the plan is April 6. Council agreed to have Jerry Holloman work with Joan to draft a letter to Callie in comment.

Under Old Business, Council was informed that the letter transmitting its last resolution is complete, and transmission is to be made shortly.

Callie is going to recommend that active participation on this Council be encouraged to the Martin County group when they meet.

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m., Friday, June 1, at Claudine's.

Of further interest, Council was made aware of the kickoff meeting for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan of the RRW Refuge on May 22.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Winn

