



**YORK RIVER &
SMALL COASTAL BASINS
ROUNDTABLE**

Biannual All-Hands Meeting
May 11, 2022
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Davis Hall Board Room, VIMS campus
Zoom option

Recording [found here](https://wmedu.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=05a6120f-ee12-4f1a-8edb-ae920117cde8&start=0), or at:

<https://wmedu.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=05a6120f-ee12-4f1a-8edb-ae920117cde8&start=0>

Meeting Purpose:

To convene the Roundtable membership for updates and discussion on forward movement.

Meeting Objectives:

- Participants will learn of Roundtable progress and updates, and discuss emerging opportunities for this stakeholder body
- Participants will learn of efforts in and around the watershed assessing and delivering on stakeholder needs, evaluating stakeholder sentiments, and fostering collective impact.

MEETING MINUTES

9:00am

Welcome and Introductions

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR-VA

- Cirse Gonzalez reviewed watershed statistics and Roundtable goals. She noted that these goals (Community, Environmental Literacy, Capacity Building and Holistic Resilience) transitioned from being Roundtable “Cornerstones,” or values, to goals as part of the new strategic planning process.
- Ms. Gonzalez reminded participants that members had access to a Roundtable portal, i.e. Google Drive folder that contains past meeting materials, in addition to a directory of members. This directory is inclusive of member strengths and needs.
 - **Contact** Cirse at cagonzalez@vims.edu for access to the Roundtable folder or to update directory information
- Ms. Gonzalez introduced the Roundtable Backbone Team, comprised of NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, CBNERR-VA and Green Fin Studio. This team has been working together to ensure Roundtable orchestration is seamless.

9:20am

Planning and Committee updates

Paula Jasinski, President, Green Fin Studio

Andrew Larkin, Chesapeake Bay Office, NOAA

- Paula Jasinski, provided an overview of the Roundtable, describing it as a forum for information sharing and noting that it does not engage in advocacy.
- Ms. Jasinski then described the prior vision and mission statements, and the need for new iterations, providing the latest edition of each for participant comment.
 - Participants encouraged emphasis of coordination and collaboration, as well as refinement and specificity with respect to the “upper” watershed. To this end, participants agreed to add “Piedmont” as a descriptor for “headwaters.”
 - Ms. Jasinski provided clarity around the term, “place-based” noting that Roundtable efforts are focused on a specific geography.
 - Participants encouraged revisiting and expanding the Roundtable’s “Glossary for Shared Understanding,” found in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.
- Ms. Jasinski next recounted the transition of the previous Roundtable Cornerstones to new Roundtable Goals, noting that the prior strategic plan had 22 goals and that this transition was made in an effort to streamline priority actions. The following comprise the Roundtable’s new goals:
 - Community: Engage as a community for the community
 - Literacy: Promote environmental literacy
 - Capacity: Build capacity
 - Resilience: Foster holistic Resilience
- Participants encouraged the expansion of environmental literacy to include “for people of all ages,” and discouraged use of the term “blue-green” with respect to infrastructure noting its negative association with cyanobacteria. Participants agreed that “natural and nature-based solutions” would be a fitting replacement.
- Ms. Jasinski described next steps in the planning process, noting that the most immediate would be developing a yearly work plan with specific projects. A separate, future meeting for Roundtable members would be held toward this end. Ms. Jasinski noted that the Roundtable would revisit its strategic plan every three years, with its Executive Board evaluating progress annually.
- Ms. Jasinski then segued to a description of the Roundtable’s organizing structure, noting that its Executive Board has historically had little decision-making power, but that the Backbone team has been working to empower them in this respect this year. She noted that Executive Board members are self nominated, and that interested participants should reach out to the Backbone Team.
 - Ms. Jasinski then reviewed other facets of Executive Board operations, noting for example, that decision making is by consensus and that terms are to last one year.
 - Participants encouraged inclusion of shared values in addition to the actions for which the Executive Board would be responsible.
 - Find the [current Executive Board members listed here](#).

- Ms. Jasinski next introduced the Roundtable's new logo, depicted above, and new social media accounts. She also reminded participants of the Roundtable Roundup, noting that Meriwether Bryant, Green Fin Studio, is at helm of latest editions.
 - In response to participant comments, Ms. Gonzalez noted that the next Executive Board meeting would discuss logo best practices.
 - The Roundtable's social media presence can now be found on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#); all participants are invited to connect.
 - Participants are encouraged to send content for the Roundtable Roundup newsletter to Paula or Meriwether: meriwether@greenfinstudio.com / paula@greenfinstudio.com

- Cirse Gonzalez then reviewed the Roundtable's four steering committees, noting that the activities of each - with the exception of the Nearshore Habitat Restoration Steering Committee, and the Science Steering Committee via the State of the York report - have been on pause while strategic planning has been underway.
- Andrew Larkin next reported on the work of the Nearshore Habitat Restoration Steering Committee, a forum for discussion on research, best practices and updates on restoration in the watershed geography. Andrew noted that the focus of the committee in the coming months is the development of a wetlands restoration plan that will prime the region for federal funding.
- Mr. Larkin then recounted [NOAA's announcement of the Middle Peninsula Habitat Focus Area](#), a designation that will allow for NOAA's concentrated focus in the geography through restoration, capacity building and research.
 - In response to participant questions, Mr. Larkin noted that Virginia's Coastal Zone Management Program could help provide information on studies in the coastal zone, and that one of the Habitat Focus Area goals for the region was to conduct operations in a manner that respected diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. Mr. Larkin also noted that while Rappahannock Community College was not involved in Habitat Focus Area efforts, the NOAA BWET program, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Friends of the Rappahannock provided additional opportunities for engagement through education.
 - Participants encouraged partnering to incentivize forested buffer areas adjacent to waters, a practice that is receiving attention for its carbon sequestration benefits.
 - Of note, the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium provides a model program for other watersheds to increase and incentivize forested land cover <https://jamesriverconsortium.org/> (per Karen Duhring).
 - Participants also noted additional funding for restoration and planning through the Infrastructure Bill via the Coastal Zone Mgmt Program and NERR System, and opportunities like the newly released [America the Beautiful](#) opportunity (\$85 million dollars in funding, due July 31, 2022).
 - Ms. Gonzalez encouraged participants to explore collaborations within the Roundtable collective for effective grant proposals.

10:00am

What Our Watershed Wants: Needs Assessment Results

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR-VA

Paula Jasinski, President, Green Fin Studio

- Paula Jasinski described the recently conducted watershed-wide needs assessment, noting that it was developed to inform the planned State of the York report. Ms. Jasinski noted that the assessment included both survey (for Roundtable members and public alike) and informational interview components, representative of watershed stakeholders from headwaters to tidewaters.
 - The needs assessment report, developed by Green Fin Studio, can be [found here](#).
- Ms. Jasinski reported that surveyed watershed practitioners engaged with the topics of water quality, habitat restoration, and education and outreach more so than any others. Meanwhile, the surveyed public primarily interacts with the watershed as residents, swimmers and wildlife watchers. Ms. Jasinski suggested that among the most important topics to those surveyed and interviewed, water quality and sea level rise consistently rose to the top; land use changes, fisheries health, harmful algal blooms and access were among other concerns of interest.
- Ms. Jasinski described that awareness of existing data was a limit for the watershed public, which indicated a desire for more real-time water quality data and a repository of holistic information.
- Ms. Jasinski detailed preferences in delivery format, noting a full suite of communications materials will be provided to accommodate many needs.
 - In response to a participant question on the potential of a dashboard, Ms. Jasinski offered that a State of the York dashboard could have a public-facing component in addition to links for practitioners interested in data access. Harry Looney, LACA, then noted the need for a dashboard that integrated multi-agency databases to depict water quality data. Mr. Looney commented that while LACA has help start this process, it requires more resources; he's looking for partnerships toward this end. Ms. Jasinski commented that Shiny (an R package) was a useful tool for organizing databases in a manner that allowed for public consumption.
 - The [State of the Elizabeth River](#) storymap was offered as a prime example of an excellent format for data delivery.
- Ms. Jasinski noted that this report is to recommend and spur action while looking at past, present and future conditions.
- Cirse Gonzalez described the needs assessment and development of the report within the context of a larger process paralleled by an Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe effort. Ultimately, Roundtable members would be provided with a suite of materials, overviews and trainings to aid in their respective dissemination of the report, due out Spring/Summer 2023.
 - In response to a participant question about the Upper Mattaponi's involvement, Ms. Gonzalez clarified that the tribe was leading an effort focused on mid-watershed geography. This effort would dovetail into, and complement, that the Roundtable's watershed-wide report.

- Ms. Gonzalez invited engagement on the State of the York report, noting that any member was welcome to take part and contribute tools and/or expertise.
- David Nunnally commented on ten years of missing data from a monitoring program on Polecat Creek, a tributary of the Mattaponi. Mr. Nunnally offered that this historical dataset could help inform trends for a watershed report or related place-based efforts. Willy Reay, CBNERR-VA, offered that he knew of the study, which included groundwater elements.

10:36am Break!

- At the break's conclusion, in response to a participant question, Cirse Gonzalez clarified that steering committees were largely on pause while strategic planning was underway; moreover, a hard look at steering committee focus and membership was necessary given shifting Roundtable strategy and work plans.

10:46am #yourYork

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

- Cirse Gonzalez led participants in an exercise to brainstorm and share watershed related issues, events, partnerships, etc. most meaningful to them at present ("radar" items), in addition to their desired ideas, collaborations, concepts for the collective Roundtable ("wishlist" items). She noted that this activity was to help serve as a launching point for work plan conversations, wherein Roundtable members would define actionable strategies for collective pursuit.
 - Combined results from in-person and [virtual](#) engagement [found here](#); organized by topic.
 - **Member Action:** Please review the [combined results](#) and comment with interest in, or knowledge of the ideas expressed.

11:20am Learning Opportunity: The "hydrocitizen" and why anthropology is key to water quality

Matthew Wilfong, University of Maryland

- Matthew Wilfong's presentation focused on the utilization of qualitative data in complementing and improving perspective on water quality practices. Specifically, Mr. Wilfong explored residential perspectives on responsibility with respect to stormwater management, a recently decentralized operation. Mr. Wilfong noted that this decentralization has required increased community engagement, primarily through education and outreach efforts, as well as utility fee and rebate systems. His exploration focused on highly urbanized, predominantly low-income communities in the Baltimore-DC region.
- Mr. Wilfong defined hydrocitizenship as an approach that explores individual rights, responsibilities and duties within water management and governance.

- Results from Mr. Wilfong's semi-structured interviews suggest that practitioners are compelled to conduct outreach to residents to meet mandated goals; that residents feel as if stormwater management is their responsibility; that program influence can be negative and have the potential to exacerbate tensions and inequities; that residents are conscious of, and desire, programs that offer holistic benefits, including benefits that incorporate their health and well-being; that quantitative indicators can be a detractor for residents for whom the metrics do not translate into benefits; and that institutional barriers can make one feel as if the effort of related engagement is not always worth the output.
- Mr. Wilfong concluded that while hydrocitizenry was an important and worthwhile approach to stormwater management, and that outreach programs and policies have the ability to change the way roles and responsibilities in watershed management are perceived by residents. However, practitioners need to be conscious of unintended and negative consequences of program implementation.
- Mr. Wilfong then introduced participants to the [Chesapeake Behavior Change](#) tool, developed to help practitioners create meaningful, place-based programs. Mr. Wilfong noted that the tool was a great starting point, though encouraged participants to ground truth the quantitative findings therein with qualitative data.
- In response to a participant question on community-based floodplain mapping, Mr. Wilfong noted that stormwater flooding was of greater concern than sea level rise in the geographies he studied. He reported that the main source of conflict between these geographies and those downstream, were the practices upstream residents were having to implement, recognizing that the benefits would be realized and leveraged by those downstream.
- KC Filipino, HRPDC, noted that local governments receive a small return on investment with respect to load and flooding reductions; more successful endeavors may be those of nonprofits or advocacy groups who can provide funding and educational resources in partnership with local governments. Mr. Wilfong commented that a main critique of this approach that he heard surface among residents in his study, was that non-profit partners were seen as government actors.
- In response to a question regarding residents' greatest concerns with their local environment, Mr. Wilfong noted that localized flooding, as well as a desire to enjoy water as a community asset were among residents' top concerns.
- Comments in the chat noted:
 - A benefit to communities could stem from education/training and future work/career opportunities (KC Filipino, HRPDC)
 - The Bay Program recently released a [series of modules](#) that highlight benefits to the local communities with respect to Bay Program goals; [Module 7](#) focuses on workforce development, career opps. The group also creates a bi-monthly newsletter to touch on these themes. [March 2022's](#) was on Stormwater and filled with resources to address some of the challenges discussed during this presentation (PJ).
- **Matthew Wilfong can be contacted at:** mwilfong@umd.edu

11:50am

Learning Session: York Riverkeeper

Robin Broder, Deputy Director, Waterkeepers Chesapeake

- Robin Broder noted that Waterkeepers is a coalition of 17 programs in the state of Virginia, including the James, Shenandoah and the Potomac. All of these programs are part of a global alliance, the Waterkeepers Alliance, which incorporates more than 300 programs worldwide.
- Ms. Broder noted that in recent years, many have called for the establishment of a Riverkeeper in this geography. In response, she's engaged in an exploration over the past couple years to gauge interest in, and capacity for, a Riverkeeper in the area. Establishing a Riverkeeper would translate to the creation of an organization with advocacy goals, something the Roundtable is currently unable to deliver; hence, filling a gap.
- Ms. Broder mentioned that in addition to working on education and restoration, one unique aspect of Waterkeepers is that they enforce the Clean Water Act and work on policy and legislation. While Waterkeeper organizations vary in size, they identify water quality issues, and strategize on how to address them.
- Ms. Broder mentioned the [Swim Guide app](#), developed by a Canadian Waterkeeper Group, as a tool that may be relevant to watershed residents. Additionally, she shared the [Water Reporter app](#), whereby community members can report water quality issues and connect with waterkeepers.
- Ms. Broder reported on a planning committee that met in October to explore a pathway for growing a Waterkeeper program in the York, noting that 'Waterkeeper Affiliate' was another potential designation that could be afforded the York. This designation would entail affiliation with a current Waterkeeper in the area, such as the James or Shenandoah; transition into a full-fledged Waterkeeper organization would be possible, though not required.
- Ms. Broder mentioned that she's working with Friends of the Rappahanock to create an outreach position for the region, helping with outreach and planning.
- Ms. Broder encouraged participants to speak with her, especially if they have any interest in participating on the planning committee.
- In response to a participant question about how other Waterkeepers in the Chesapeake might be involved in restoration projects, Ms. Broder mentioned that Shore Rivers on the Eastern Shore, James River Association and the organization on the Severn River have engaged in restoration.
- Ms. Broder concluded by noting that the global clean water conference was in DC this year, and would celebrate 50 years of the Clean Water Act.
- **Robin Broder can be contacted at:** Robin@waterkeeperschesapeake.org

12:00pm

Kudos and Close-Out

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

- Cirse Gonzalez reported that Matthew Wells, formerly of WestRock who was a member of the Business Advisory Steering Committee, is now the new Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Ms. Gonzalez then shared commendations for Harry Looney, who was recognized for his tireless water quality monitoring in the Upper York Watershed, in addition to his outreach to numerous state and federal agencies, and academic institutions through his water quality stakeholder meetings and water quality analysis.

- Ms. Gonzalez then recognized the work of Dawn Shank, as well as Dave Evans and David Nunnally, all Roundtable Board members. She commended each for their contributions, wishing the latter two well in retirement and former well as she transitioned on from her post as MPRA President.
- Finally, Ms. Gonzalez reported that Robyn Woolsey of Colonial SWCD was winner of the CBNERR-VA prize for submission of the State of the York survey.
- David Nunnally shared then some lived experience in behavior change, motivated by conversations with Dave Evans. Mr. Nunnally echoed Mr. Wilfong's take home points noting that sometimes you can't see success in the quantitative metrics.

12:05pm Adjourn

Participants

- **In person**
 - Cirse Gonzalez, CBNERR-VA
 - Andrew Larkin, NOAA CBO
 - Paula Jasinski, GreenFin
 - Meriwether Bryant, GreenFin
 - Robin Broder, Waterkeepers Chesapeake
 - Dave Evans, VA DEQ
 - David Nunally, Caroline County
 - Robyn Woolsey, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Harry Looney, Lake Anna Civic Association
 - Dorothy Geyer, Colonial National Historical Park
 - Matthew Wilfong, University of Maryland
 - Audrey Mitchell, Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Assn (MPRA)
 - Jim Wallace, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Robyn Woolsey, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District
- **Virtual**
 - Michael Rigdon, Lake Anna Civic Association
 - Lauren Taneyhill, NOAA CBO
 - Mark Williams, Luck Stone
 - Elise Trelegan, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
 - Ross Weaver, Wetlands Watch
 - Karen Duhring, CCRM
 - Shannon Sprague, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
 - Willy Reay, CBNERR
 - Karen Fetty, H-C SWCD
 - Zach Greenberg, PEW
 - Denise Mosca, Gloucester Clean and Green Committee
 - Michael Gelber, Lake Anna Civic Association
 - Sarah Stewart, PlanRVA

- Luke Peters, Berkley Group
- Paul Vidonic, Dominion Energy
- Danny Bryant, Dominion Energy
- Mark Williams, Luck Stone
- KC Fillipino, HRPDC
- Scott Lerberg, CBNERR
- Benjamin McFarlane, Hampton Roads PDC