County of Albemarle
Community Development Department – Planning Division

Kim Biasiolli
kbiasiolli@albemarle.org
tel: (434) 296-5832 ext. 3325

June 30, 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 and continues in parallel with Phase II.

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 and April 7, 2021.

The Phase II public engagement process has been underway since January 2021 and resulted in development of 16 strategies with potential for further consideration (see Attachment B – Table 1).

Timeline and Approach

The timeline for Phase II of the project includes four quarterly stages of the project 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* - Stage 2 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 is review of selected strategies and development of proposals, both internally and by stakeholders. A work session with the BOS is planned.
- *Decide – Oct-Dec 2021* - Final proposals will be presented to the BOS. Implementation of selected strategies will extend beyond this timeframe.

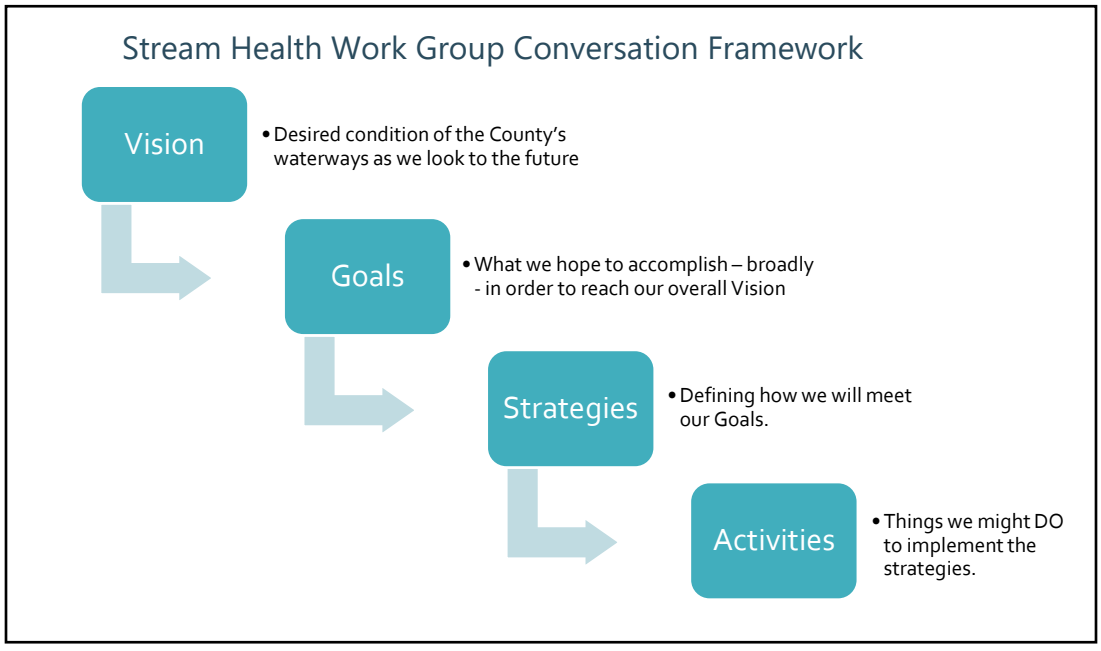
WWW.ALBEMARLE.ORG
401 McIntire Road| Charlottesville, VA 22902-4596

Progress To-Date

The following summary describes key elements of progress and public engagement activities during the *Define* stage of the project (April-June 2021). A detailed description of the previous stages of the project was provided in the April 7, 2021 Stream Health Initiative Project Update.

Define – Apr-June 2021

- The Stream Health Community Learning Series continued through April 9. Topics were selected to help address the education goals identified in Phase I and based on topics of interest identified by the community. County staff and technical experts from other organizations were invited to share their knowledge and expertise and answer questions from the community. The video archive will continue to be available as a resource.
- The Stream Health Work Group, organized to provide diverse perspectives and expertise, and to advise County staff on this project, met six times from March 11-June 22. Work Group membership includes representation from various organizations and stakeholder groups, as well as community members with expertise and/or interest in improving stream health.
- The efforts of the Work Group began with identifying factors that impair stream health and challenges to improving it. The next steps involved drafting a Vision and Goals for stream health in our community (see page 4).
- Staff solicited feedback from the broader community on the draft Vision and Goals through a second questionnaire, open from May 10-27, titled the "Define Questionnaire." The sample size of respondents was relatively small; however, of the 39 participants, the majority (67%) supported the Vision as written and support for the goals ranged from 76% to 97%. Changes to the Vision were made as a result of this public feedback. The full results of the Define Questionnaire are provided here as Attachment D.
- After defining the Vision and Goals for stream health in our community, the focus of the Work Group shifted to identifying potential strategies and activities that might help address those goals.



- The established goals highlighted several distinct approaches to improving stream health in the Rural Area, including regulatory, voluntary, incentive-based, educational, and partnership-focused.
- There was broad support within the Work Group for utilizing a variety of these different approaches; however, representatives from the agricultural community expressed strong opposition to employing a regulatory approach for rural land uses.

- Over forty strategies and activities were identified through Work Group discussions focused on exploring these approaches and guided by the Vision and Goals.
- A series of smaller, focused conversations on specific topics occurred in late May and early June, with individual stakeholders and subject matter experts, to help analyze and refine strategies identified by the Work Group, and to discuss additional constraints and considerations.
- Through these conversations and further analysis, staff developed a refined list of strategies for further consideration (see Table 1 – Attachment B). The refined list was presented to the Work Group for review and feedback on June 22.

Next Steps

The focus of the *Develop* stage (July-Sept) is development and review of proposals, based on selected and supported strategies. Staff will continue working with stakeholders and technical experts to better understand resource and staffing needs, feasibility, constraints, timeframes, and criteria for implementation. In the *Decide* stage (Oct-Dec), proposals will be finalized and presented to the Board, and public hearings will allow for any final input from the public to be heard. Implementation of selected proposals will extend beyond this timeframe.

Vision and Goals for Stream Health in our Community

VISION: *Albemarle County will have clean, healthy stream systems that allow for safe utilization and support a diverse and resilient natural environment and a thriving rural economy. The quality of the water and riparian areas will provide important benefits such as drinking water protection, climate resilience, protection of biodiversity, erosion and sediment control, flood mitigation, and scenic beauty; and will maintain healthy aquatic and terrestrial habitat, support agriculture and other rural industries, and safely allow for recreational uses such as swimming, boating, and fishing.*

GOAL 1: Maintain and improve local conditions to ensure that our streams and rivers are meeting or exceeding the state water quality standards.

GOAL 2: Increase our understanding of the status and needs of our waterways through monitoring and assessment within our watersheds.

GOAL 3: Strengthen programs, policies, and enforcement mechanisms to have clear, effective, and enforceable measures.

GOAL 4: Increase and promote incentives and voluntary measures that protect stream health.

GOAL 5: Protect and restore riparian systems to maintain and enhance the benefits they provide to people and the natural environment.

GOAL 6: Foster a well-informed and educated public that understands the importance of stream health, local policies, best management practices, and individual actions that can affect stream health.