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# CHARLOTTESVILLE TOMORROW

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2013

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## A River Runs to It Albemarle water authority endorses funding for river commission

by Sean Tubbs | Friday, April 19, 2013 at 12:33 a.m.

The Albemarle County Service Authority says it will support \$25,000 in funding for an agency charged with coordinating environmental policies to improve the health of the Rivanna River's watershed.

"The city and county have gone through quite a lengthy process to come up with an ostensible agreement to do joint river corridor planning," said Leslie Middleton, the executive director of the Rivanna River Basin Commission.

"What that exactly looks like will be determined in part by where the funding comes from and who puts together the plan for that," Middleton added.

The ACSA has one vote through its executive director Gary O'Connell.

Middleton said the money would be used for a variety of tasks to help the community comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's program to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. The program calls the upper limit of water quality standards the Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL. To comply with the TMDL, Virginia must reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorous, that enters waterways draining into the bay.

"It's going to become very apparent over the next year and a half that one of the main strategies for addressing the required nutrient sediment reductions for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL is going to be nutrient trading," Middleton said.

Currently, point sources such as water-treatment facilities can trade credits with each other, but Middleton said the RRBC's research would look into how those mechanisms can be extended to non-point sources such as large landowners that generate excess amounts of nutrients and sediment.

One water activist and former ACSA board member said that he supported the funding request, despite the fact no local government funding was anticipated when the commission was formed in 2007.

John Martin said the RRBC has been "highly beneficial" to Albemarle citizens because it develops a science-based approach to watershed policy by gathering together the watershed managers from four jurisdictions as well as the RWSA. In addition to Albemarle County and Charlottesville, Louisa and Greene counties are members.

Bill Kittrell, a member of the ACSA Board of Directors and an official at The Nature Conservancy, said he evaluated the request with ratepayers in mind.

"The real thing that interests me is trying to get ahead of how the TMDL is likely to affect our rates and the way that the RWSA has to comply with the TMDL," Kittrell said. ACSA Board member Liz Palmer asked why Middleton hadn't previously pursued funding from local governments.

"In the beginning, we all didn't quite know what the RRBC was and what it was going to do," Middleton said.

Initial funding from The Nature Conservancy provided start-up funds, and she said it seemed inappropriate to ask local governments during the financial collapse that began in 2008.

"There's an argument for general government to be funding this," Palmer said. "They are the ones that will have to have stormwater utilities or whatever they end up doing [to comply with TMDL]."

The ACSA voted unanimously to tell O'Connell to support the request when the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority votes on the request next month.



Leslie Middleton addresses the ACSA

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