



Rivanna River Basin Commission

A CONFLUENCE OF INTERESTS

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July 9, 2012

Hon. Shaun Kenney, Chair
Fluvanna Board of Supervisors
County of Fluvanna
P.O. Box 540
Palmyra, VA 22963

Re: Proposed Landscape Ordinance Requirements for Fluvanna County and
Proposed Rezoning at Camp Friendship Site

Dear Mr. Kenney,

I am writing on behalf of the Rivanna River Basin Commission to provide information and recommendations regarding the importance of protecting, maintaining, and planting riparian buffers along the Rivanna River in Fluvanna County as the county considers changes to its parking and landscaping ordinances and the proposed rezoning at the Camp Friendship site for a PUD.

As you know, by Virginia statute the Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC) is empowered to “provide guidance and make recommendations to local, state, and federal legislative and administrative bodies, and to others as it deems necessary and appropriate, regarding the use, stewardship, and enhancement of the [Rivanna] Basin’s water and other natural resources.”¹ We have been meeting as a group of elected officials and appointed citizens from the four Rivanna localities (Fluvanna, Greene, Charlottesville, and Albemarle) since 2007, and we have been supported by our technical advisory committee that includes members of local government staff and technical experts in the fields of hydrology, ecology, stormwater management, and water quality protection.

The importance of maintaining natural vegetation adjacent to riverbanks to the health of the Rivanna cannot be over-emphasized. Buffers are one of the most important -- and effective -- tools for providing stability to eroding streambanks and protection from the damaging effects of runoff from every kind of land use (agricultural, industrial, rural, and suburban). Every state (Virginia DCR, DEQ, Cooperative Extension) and federal agency (EPA, USDA, NRCS) lists riparian buffers as an important conservation tool. In 2009, the RRBC provided recommendations regarding stormwater management to each of its member localities (see Attachment 1) that encouraged:

- proactive adoption of stormwater management on public lands that promote infiltration
- promoting by incentives and other means the use of these best management practices by private developers.

¹ *Code of Virginia: Title 6, Chapter 5.6, 62.1-69.45 through 62.1-69.52, Rivanna River Basin Commission.*

Albemarle County	City of Charlottesville	Fluvanna County	Greene County	Culpeper SWCD	Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Dennis Rooker	Dave Norris	Joe Chesser	Eddie Dean		
Duane Snow	Dede Smith	Robert Ullenbruch	Jim Frydl, Vice Chair	Robert Brame, Treasurer	Lonnie Murray
Lizbeth Palmer	Keith Lancaster	Marvin Moss, Chair	Carl Schmitt		

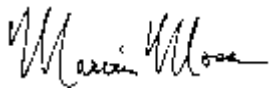
Since then, many of these recommendations were codified in the new Virginia stormwater regulations. And now, we have more information from the study, *StreamWatch Land Use Study (2011)*, by the water quality monitoring organization that works locally. This study has affirmed the importance of buffers and forest cover in maintaining stream health and shows that even suburban development intensifies stream degradation (Attachment 2). Please note that this study also reveals that much of the Rivanna watershed located in Fluvanna County includes stream that do not meet the Virginia standard for aquatic life, which means that fish and other aquatic species do not have water quality healthy enough for them to thrive and in many cases to even survive.

Researchers vary on what an adequate riparian buffer width should be. Conventional wisdom tells us that if forests and trees provide the best protection for our streams and river, we should strive to have the widest buffers possible between our developed lands and the water. We also understand that “waterfront” living is highly valued and that visual and physical access to water is an amenity that many developers and landowners would prefer. However, we believe that clean and healthy waterways are also valued for swimming and boating, fishing and the enjoyment of the wildlife that takes advantage of riparian buffers. Fluvanna citizens enjoy stretches of the Rivanna that are still deemed healthy -- but continued development of land along the river is shifting the balance of healthy to unhealthy more rapidly than we might have thought.

The Chesapeake Bay TMDL (“clean up”) process is requiring all states in the Bay watershed -- and therefore also all localities whose waters drain to the Chesapeake -- to take measures to ensure that no excessive sediment and nutrients compromise the health of rivers that drain to the Bay. During 2011-12, the RRBC worked closely with your staff to develop baseline information and identify strategies that will help Fluvanna reduce its share of pollution to the Rivanna and James rivers. Ensuring riparian buffers and the other tools of stormwater management outlined in “the menu” will help Fluvanna meet these reductions in a cost-effective manner by sharing the responsibility with those who are requesting permission to alter the landscapes in Fluvanna County.

We encourage the Fluvanna Planning Commission to recommend and the Board of Supervisors to require the preservation of riparian buffers of at least 100-foot widths along the Rivanna River and its tributaries. We also encourage Fluvanna County to take advantage of the rezoning request at Camp Friendship to require stormwater management through landscaping requirements that meets or exceeds the new Virginia Stormwater Regulations that will take effect in 2014. The standards have been set by these regulations, and Fluvanna County residents in the future will appreciate your efforts to protect one of the most historic -- and relatively healthy -- rivers in Virginia.

Sincerely,



Marvin F. Moss, Chair, Rivanna River Basin Commission

cc:

Fluvanna Board of Supervisors
Fluvanna Planning Commission
Ms. Allyson Fincham, Planning Director

Attachment 1: RRBC Letter to Locality 09Jan15 re BMPs

Attachment 2: Stream Health Follows Land Use - Highlights of the SW Land Use Study