



ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP Meeting #1

**Wednesday, February 22, 2012
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Cansler YMCA, Community Room
616 Jessamine Street, Knoxville, TN 37917**

Welcome and Introductory Presentation

The chairperson for the Working Group, Carol Evans, welcomed everyone, and the attendees introduced themselves. Facilitator Ann Coulter noted that Carol would serve as the official contact to transfer information coming from the working group to the leadership team.

It was noted the goal of the first working group meeting is to gather reactions to the Environment Section of the draft Existing Conditions Memo, which was distributed prior to the meeting via email and paper copies were provided at the meeting as well. There was then a presentation describing Plan East Tennessee (PlanET), where the region is in the planning process, and the role of the working groups. Highlights were provided of the draft Existing Conditions Memo (February 2012), noting both regional trends and focus area trends for the working group.

The Environment Focus Area Trends from the Existing Conditions Memo draft were summarized below.

1. The region has diverse geographic features, prime farmland soils, and high biodiversity and is part of nine watersheds. However, these resources are under stress from non-native species, danger of soil slippage, water pollution, and drought
2. There is an extensive, and growing, green infrastructure system that contains various habitat types, some of them connected by an expanding system of greenways and blueways.
3. Most of the region's farms are small family operations experiencing declining profitability, and the overall amount of farmed land is decreasing.
4. The overall air quality of the region is poor, causing significant impacts on human and environmental health.

5. The area contains brownfields and some jurisdictions have received funds to assist with remediation.

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED:

- Agenda
- PlanET Project Factsheet
- Working Groups Information Sheet
- PlanET - Existing Conditions Memo February 2012 Draft, Environment Section

PARTIES PRESENT:

1. John Harris (*Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee - CAC*)
2. Patrice Cole (*Stormwater and Wetland Consultants*)
3. Tracy Jones (*Knox County Stormwater*)
4. Tiffany Lynn Foster (*Tennessee Valley Authority - TVA*)
5. Roy Arthur (*Knox County Stormwater*)
6. Cathy Elliott (*Army Corps of Engineers*)
7. Lynne Liddington (*Knox County Air Quality Management*)
8. Greg Johnson (*US Geological Survey - USGS*)
9. Shannon Perrin (*University of Tennessee (UT) Extension*)
10. Paul Berney (*Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center, Knox Housing Partnership - KHP*)
11. John Goddard (*University of Tennessee (UT) Extension*)
12. John Mike (*Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency - TWRA*)
13. Athanasia Lewis (*City of Oak Ridge*)
14. Ellen Smith (*City of Oak Ridge*)
15. Wolf Naegeli (*Foundation for Global Sustainability - FGS*)
16. Bruce Glanville (*Energy Home Basics*)
17. John Lamb (*Blount County*)
18. Phil Chambers (*Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation - TDEC*)
19. Kim Raia (*Little River Watershed*)
20. Carol Evans (*Legacy Parks Foundation*)
21. Chad Helliwinckle (*University of Tennessee Agricultural Policy Analysis Center*)
22. Al Iannacone (*Knox County Health Department*)
23. Mike Crosby (*Breath Clean Air Action Team, Inc. - BCAAT, Inc.*)
24. Laura Ferguson (*on behalf of Berny Ilgner - ARCADIS, Inc.*)

Staff: Liz Albertson, Alex Zendel, and Amy Brooks

PARTIES MISSING FROM THE DISCUSSION:

- Farmers
- Utilities
- TN Div of Forestry (*PlanET Staff Note: Tom Simpson, Regional Forester, was invited and would like to be involved in future meetings, however, he could not attend this first meeting.*)
- Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE)
- Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF) – (*PlanET Staff Note: Dawn Coppock was invited, but is busy with the legislative session and would like to be kept in the loop and invited to subsequent meetings.*)
- Sierra Club (*PlanET Staff Note: Mac Post was invited, but did not respond.*)
- TDOT – Environmental division (MS4)
- Nature Conservancy
- National Park Service (*PlanET Staff Note: Dale Ditmanson, GSMNP Superintendent was invited and staff liason Bob Miller responded noting interest, but possible lack of ability to make time commitment, but would like to be kept in the loop.*)
- Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP)
- John Nolt – Environmental Law
- County/City Solid Waste Departments
- Keep America Beautiful (KAB) – Keep Anderson Beautiful (KAB)/Keep Blount Beautiful (KBB) (*PlanET Staff Note: Charlene DeSha from Keep Blount Beautiful was invited, but could not attend, but would like to be kept in the loop.*)

Questions and Responses

Participants were asked to answer the following questions, combining their responses to both questions.

- **Are there any group focus area-related issues, challenges, or opportunities not adequately presented in the Existing Conditions Memo?**
- **Are issues related to the topic adequately addressed for the entire region?**
 - **Waste management / recycling:** Waste bottle bills, landfill concerns, litter issue.
 - **Groundwater – prone to contamination:** No mention in the report, rural folks relying on groundwater is an issue because the geology here is prone to contamination.
 - **Institutional local food sourcing:** (e.g. Knox County Schools, Cysco sourcing locally) as well as agriculture and farmland preservation.
 - **Urban farms and community gardening** interest (e.g. Beardsley).

- **Natural assets for “Geotourism”:** Outdoor recreation is a great opportunity, but how does it interrelate with economic development?
- **Water loss** from the utilities system, more resilient supply is needed and more connections.
- **More attention should be directed to quantity of runoff/stormwater management, increased flooding (water quantity):** How it impacts land use/land values, see: FEMA flood report/data and water quality. There is inadequate public awareness of the amount of runoff and infiltration.
- **Growing resistance to regulation** in response to environmental issues, lack of cooperation/coordination of local jurisdictions, and denial of the existence of environmental problems.
- Need to better understand the impact of **VMT on air quality and water quality.**
- **Ecological footprint: need to address this better.** The ecological footprint and ecological processes are not adequately addressed. Incorporate ecological indicators into this report (e.g. birders, bird count numbers).
- **Lack of strategic approach to watershed issues:** A lot of opportunities / resources go into fixing bad creeks, what about impact from addressing less significantly impacted water bodies?
- **Air pollution transport:** The report exaggerated the region’s air quality by saying it’s one of the worst in the country. Inter-regional transport of air pollution is not adequately presented. We are under attainment currently, misrepresentation of severity of air quality conditions. We need to use actual EPA data, not American Lung Association – we’re not poor quality.
 - Dissenting opinion – This area is almost not meeting the 75 ppm of particulate (challenging that this is actual poor quality), there is some validity to the American Lung Association reports data. Our air quality is poor.
- **More attention needed to invasive species:** as well as how the reduction in acreage of farmland relates to that number.
- **Market dysfunction for local farms and impact of the economy on farms:** TWRA has incentives for farmers to quit farming and make wildlife habitat. Dairy/tobacco/beef production market shifts. Market doesn’t fit production capabilities/conditions.
- **Increasing agricultural production:** Production costs are three times that of 20 years ago. In 20 more years we are not going to see farming.
- **Loss of agricultural jobs and education:** No incentives to enter the field.
- **Incentives needed for water sensitive development, lack of water containment practices:** (e.g. previous materials, rain gardens, etc...)
- **Need to address embalming chemical leaching in cemeteries,** should be in report.

- **Need policy to reduce fossil fuel use.** Would like to see something dealing with policies that address the dependence on fossil fuels.
- **Exploitation of public land for development / extraction:** The report says we have areas that are there to protect wildlife habitat, etc... but the majority of the lands are used for recreation and/or extractive uses, recreational uses also impact wildlife.
- **Decreased funding for program implementation** -- Money affects all these issues, fighting to get funding for adequate program implementation.
- **Lack of public education for water resources / features:** Need more in-system mitigation within watersheds where the impacts are occurring.
- **Increased equestrian recreation has implications on water quality:** More cattle farmers are turning to horses and more people are riding horses. There are also animal abuse issues related to not feeding horses, because many can't afford them now and they also can't slaughter horses.
- **Need for holistic permitting process - development/mining/others coordination:** We don't have a holistic permitting system tracking process for permits for developing/impacting in a watershed, since there are so many institutions/agencies controlling for different issues/impacts.
- **Need increase sinkhole and wetland protection.**
- **Prioritize areas for conservation easements.**
- **Nuisance wildlife.**
- **Impacts of stalled development projects.**
- **Hazardous waste disposal.**
- **Loss of green infrastructure:** We do not currently have adequate protection of those areas or mechanism to make connections.
- **Insufficient bonding value for permitting / development.**
- **Sustainability.** There should be awareness of the RSPD, the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Sustainability has not been addressed at all.

Other Comments/Research Points of Concern:

- A study was done a few years ago by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Statewide Water Resources Planning: A Nine State Study* http://www.tn.gov/tacir/PDF_FILES/Other_Issues/Statewide_Water_Resources.pdf
- EPA has a new tool for prioritizing watersheds, *Recovery Potential Screening: Tools for Comparing Impaired Waters Restorability* <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/cwa/tmdl/recovery/index.cfm> (tool) http://water.epa.gov/learn/training/wacademy/webcasts_index.cfm (related webcast)

- Quality of life issues, significant odor problems (particularly in Loudon County – from factories not being regulated by TDEC, b/c they don't regulate for odor issues, affecting economic development opportunities), ash issues, also not regulated by development.
- One of the only opportunities for habitat protection is burning by TWRA (in direct conflict with air quality management).
- Concern was expressed that there should be overlap among the working groups to keep the groups informed. This was a problem in the Nine Counties, One Vision process.

Time Sensitive Issues:

- **Is there any particular urgency or time sensitivity to issues, challenges, or opportunities discussed?**
 1. **Stalled development.** The opportunity exists to identify procedures for stalled developments – TDEC needs more staff to deal with these – there isn't an immediate resource to deal with them. Bonds are issued for developments by counties, but with the recession, these sites sit undeveloped. Bonds are not adequate to address the issues. Inadequacy of TDEC bonds, example in Oak Ridge, radioactive waste particularly.
 2. **Update of GAP analysis for conservation easements:** Update of the GAP analysis and relationship to conservation easements, potential for partnering on the park boundaries, e.g. Smokies, and look at some of the corridors. GAP analysis is out of date for the area.
 3. **Tennessee Division of Forestry to double harvesting:** State Division of Forestry is getting ready to double timber harvesting, there is an opportunity to challenge this right now.
 4. **Lack of land clearing permits/regulations:** Clearing and grubbing permits for agricultural purposes are not regulated and areas have been cleared and left and it's not good for the environment.

Priorities: List the most important trends/issues for the working group's PlanET focus area.

Each participant was asked to write down their three most compelling points from those listed above. The results are shown below.

1. Water in general. Lack of a strategic approach to watershed issues, polluted groundwater, flooding, stormwater runoff-particularly in quantity, water loss from utility systems, water containment, public education around water issues, lack of wetland protection, impact of horses on water quality, etc.
2. The region has diverse geographic features, prime farmland soils, & high biodiversity and is part of nine watersheds. However, these resources are under stress from non-native species, danger of soil slippage, water pollution, and drought.

3. There is growing resistance to regulation in response to environmental issues, lack of cooperation/coordination of local jurisdictions within the region, and denial existence of environmental issues/problems.
4. Air Quality. Impact of VMT, air pollution transport.
5. Agricultural Issues. Loss of farmland and loss of farmers, mismatch of production and market forces, lack of local food sourcing, growth of urban farms and community gardens.

Closing

Ann Coulter reminded the group that the Environment Working Group Chair, Carol Evans would be taking a summary of today's meeting to Leadership Team meeting on April 19th.

The group can expected to be notified about how to interact on the PlanET website, so that discussion among the working group members can occur outside of meetings.

The next meeting will be sometime in late May/early June and the group will be notified as soon as possible.

Comments received from working group members will be passed along to the consultant team.