

Planning for Outdoor Recreation and Community Revitalization for the Clinch River Valley

October 4th, 2011, 3:30 – 5:30 pm
Oxbow Center, St. Paul, Virginia

Meeting Summary

Facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia

Meeting Summary overview

Fifty three people gathered at the Oxbow Center in St. Paul on October 4th, 2011 for the fifth meeting of a series to build local economies by planning for outdoor recreation and community revitalization for the Clinch River watershed. The meeting was facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN) at the University of Virginia.

During the meeting, participants discussed and commented on a draft vision for this effort, which was created by the volunteer-based steering committee established at the Strategic Planning meeting in August. Other relevant items discussed include the draft goal areas, updates by community members were presented, and finally participants met in smaller groups to refine and plan follow up action steps for each goal. A summary of the meeting is below, and an appendix at the end of the meeting summary contains the drafted Vision Statement, and the five goal areas.

Introduction

Fifty three people gathered at the Oxbow Center in St. Paul, VA on October 4th, 2011 for a community-wide, consensus based meeting on planning for outdoor recreation and community revitalization for the Clinch River watershed.. The meeting was facilitated by Christine Gyovai and Frank Dukes from the Institute for Environmental Negotiation at the University of Virginia. This meeting was the fifth in a series of meetings originating with the first meeting in September 2010 titled Building Local Economies in Southwest Virginia. The most recent meeting was held on August 3rd, 2011.

Frank Dukes welcomed participants to the meeting and discussed meeting guidelines with participants. Christine Gyovai then gave an overview of the agenda and reviewed the last meeting held on August 3rd. The main goal of the meeting was to further refine the five draft goal areas identified and discussed at the August 3rd meeting. The five previously established draft goal areas were:

- **Goal 1:** Develop a Linear Clinch River State Park
- **Goal 2:** Develop and Integrate Access Points, Trails, and Campgrounds along the Clinch River
- **Goal 3:** Enhance Water Quality in the Clinch River

- **Goal 4:** Develop and Enhance Environmental Education Opportunities for all Community Members in the Clinch River Watershed
- **Goal 5:** Connect Downtown Revitalization and Outdoor Recreation Efforts along the Clinch River, and Expand Entrepreneurship and Marketing Opportunities

Also, Christine Gyovai welcomed two special guests from the state of Oregon. Commissioner Tony Hyde from Columbia County in Oregon and Wendy Willis, Director of the Policy Consensus Initiative, were in attendance. Wendy Willis has many years of experience working as a facilitator with rural communities in Oregon, and Commissioner Hyde has experience developing a state park to revitalize the economy of his county, which has traditionally relied on logging to provide for the local economic base. Additionally, Lindy Turner, Director of River Place on the Clinch, an eco-tourism initiative based on the Clinch River in Kyles Ford, Tennessee, was in attendance, and presented information on the establishment and success of River Place on the Clinch later in the meeting during the Access Point small group discussion.

Relevant Updates

After introductions, participants shared recent updates that were relevant to the larger group. These updates included:

- Scott County recently submitted a grant proposal to Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for a three phase project including installing access points and water quality enhancement; an Economic Development Study and an Economic Impact Analysis; and for project coordination and facilitation. The grant was submitted in September, and a matching funding request has been submitted to a foundation for support for related efforts of the Clinch River Strategy by the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable.
- Virginia Tech will be hosting the 2011 Water Research Symposium on November 15th. The symposium will focus on the challenges of balancing the management of coal and water in central Appalachia. Several experts will discuss policies and scientific evidence associated with water resources and mining in central Appalachia. More information can be found at: <http://vwrrc.vt.edu/index.html>
- The Spearhead Trails adventure tourism initiative, part of the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (SRRA), for Southwest Virginia was recently awarded a \$200,000 grant by the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. The funds will be used to meet program expenses and assist with the development of an adventure tourism trail system that will extend through 7 counties. SRRA also received a \$70,000 grant under Governor McDonnell's Building Collaborative Communities program.
- An Entrepreneurship Blueprint is currently being drafted for Southwest Virginia by many local partners, including UVA-Wise, and it correlates with several goals articulated in the Clinch River Strategy. The draft Blueprint will be completed within the next six weeks and then presented to others for feedback, with the goal of having a finished document by

the end of the year. Contact Shannon Blevins of UVA-Wise for more information at: srb8q@uvawise.edu.

Clinch River Strategy Draft Vision Statement

A draft Clinch River vision statement, which has been drafted by Steering Committee members, was presented to the group:

By 2014, the Clinch River Valley will be recognized as a national and international eco-tourism destination based on the unique biodiversity, natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities found only in this region. This initiative will bring measurable economic success and new business growth to the communities in the Clinch River Valley while protecting the globally and nationally rare natural species found in the Clinch River watershed. Southwest Virginia's cultural heritage tourism, outdoor recreation and broadband infrastructure efforts that are transforming the region through economic re-structuring and downtown revitalization will continue to grow as a result of this initiative.

Participants were also asked for any corrections or additions that needed to be made on the draft Vision Statement. The following suggestions and comments were made by participants:

- Inclusion of the word 'biodiversity' into the first sentence of the vision statement. The participant reasoned that the opening statement should reflect one of the major assets of the Clinch River—its biodiversity.
- Consider reducing the length of the vision statement and the draft goals:
 - One participant said that overlap existed among certain elements of the draft goals, for instance goals for the creation of a state park were similar to the goals for enhancing water quality in the Clinch watershed.
 - Another participant simply mentioned that the statement and goals was too long, and should be reduced.

The Steering Committee will use these comments and then present an updated version of the draft goals and vision to the larger group at a later date.

Small Group Discussions

Participants then met in small groups to further discuss each of the goals, with identifying priority actions and next steps for each goal. The small group discussions also focused on opportunities, challenges, and gaps for each goal area. After the small group discussions, the group facilitator reported back to the larger group on key themes and next steps for each goal area.

A summary of each action groups' discussion in relation to their specific draft goal area is below.

Goal 1 Action Group: Exploring a Linear Clinch River State Park

Group Participants: Frank Dukes, Allen Combs, Radfert Rhea, Linda Marshall, Karen Davidson, Lou Ann Wallace, Tony Hyde, Shane Hanlon, Wendy Willis, Steve Lindeman, Kim Steika, and Katy Shackelford

Primary Focus of the Session: How to do conduct an effective state park feasibility study

- Funding Opportunities
 - Grant through National Parks Service
 - Trojan Nuclear Plant Study (11k turning a decommissioned nuclear plant into State Park: half private industry, half state parks)
 - Virginia Tech Landscape Architecture
 - Dominion Energy gave \$48,000 for State Envirothon in Virginia
 - AEP may decommission
 - National Refuge—political pressure is not available yet
- Funding Challenges
 - DCR would not have financial or staff resources to develop the feasibility study
 - US Fish and Wildlife cannot buy lands without refuge—but can give money to private land owners
- Resources
 - Oregon Solutions Process overview (structured process that engages all parties and brings visibility and agency support)
 - Project is designated, neutral convener brings parties together
 - Contacts are called
 - Involve everyone who is a stakeholder including permission needed and funding opportunities
 - “We put in, will you put in too” (potential method of commitment)
 - Sign a letter to what has been committed to and completed, called a Declaration of Cooperation
- Other Questions and Issues to Consider
 - When is it time to plan? to implement?
 - What is in it for the county supervisor?
 - What does this group need?
 - Do we want to change our meeting format?
 - Need to collaborate with all stakeholders
 - Need a “how to” manual to celebrate each piece of progress
 - The trail is not by itself an economic generator, but it builds social and physical infrastructure
 - The timeline is long and extensive, therefore investors must be committed.

- The group was meeting again a few days after the Oct. 4 meeting to further discuss components of a feasibility study/ economic impact analysis, as well as to draft a white paper describing the purposes of the group.

Goal 2 Action Group: Develop and Integrate Access Points, Trails, and Campgrounds along the Clinch River

Group Participants: Randy Rose, Jennifer Puckett, Jack McLanahan, Lindy Turner, Denise Ambrose, Kathy Stewart, Michael Wampler, James “Skip” Sheets, Greg Edwards, Tammy Dotson, and Todd Christenson

River Place on the Clinch Presentation

Lindy Turner, director of the Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and manager of River Place on the Clinch—an ecotourism center in Kyles Ford, TN, began the session by giving a presentation on the River Place on the Clinch. Please visit clinchriverva.wordpress.com for the entire powerpoint presentation. Below is a summary of her presentation.

- The River Place on the Clinch is a sustainable ecotourism initiative located in Kyles Ford, TN. The purpose of the initiative is to revitalize a community and create jobs by building on natural and community assets—without compromising environmental integrity. The River Place on the Clinch is owned and operated by Clinch-Powell RC&D Council, Inc., a 501c3 not for profit organization.
- The River Place on the Clinch began in September 2007 with the opening of a Market. Afterwards, several other components were added including:
 - Cabins in November 2007
 - Café in December 2007
 - Conservation Center in April 2008
 - Outfitters in May 2009
 - And, Outdoor music stage in July 2010
- River Place on the Clinch was first conceived of after a tourism feasibility study in 2003. The study lead to the creation of Appalachian Quilt Trail, and in 2005 the board of supervisors decided to make an investment in the infrastructure for River Place on the Clinch.
- Current the River Place on the Clinch is composed of:
 - 17 acres
 - A store and café building
 - 7 cabins (one under renovation)
 - 3.5 acres of camping

- 1 retreat center (building leased on 2 acres)
- Invest for the initiative took several thousands of dollars and has faced many challenges including staffing and infrastructure needs.
- There have been several keys to success for their initiative, including: passion, local support, and time.

After the presentation, the group decided to visit the River Place on the Clinch in order to become better familiar with how the nonprofit operates. The group agreed on an overnight stay with the River Place as well as a behind the scenes tour on date of November 4th-5th. Please email IEN's Pete Guzman at pg4ez@virginia.edu by Oct. 31st if you'd like to join the trip.

Updates:

Afterwards, Randy Rose addressed the group with an update of recent activity by the Access Points group. The most recent development was an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant that was submitted by Jennifer Puckett of Scott County for the Access Points group. The grant included funding for:

1. The development/renovation of access points (Five specific access points were identified) along the Clinch River.
2. An Outdoor Recreation Specialist, who would be responsible for identifying more outdoor recreation opportunities along the river.
3. A Water Quality Coordinator, who would be responsible for enhancing the water quality of the river.
4. IEN facilitation and coordination, to further progress and communication.
5. Environmental Education planning and signage at key access points, with a grant proposal going to the Blue Moon Fund from the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable for a match.

Also, potential partners and other sources for future grants were identified. Partners include:

- Town of St. Paul
- St. Paul Tomorrow
- Scott County
- Wise County

Other potential grant opportunities include:

- Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Spring 2012
- And the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)

The group also identified several other considerations that need to be addressed. The following are issues that need to be addressed:

1. Recently submitted grant proposal should be revised and edited: clearer descriptions are needed for each access point.
2. A land survey should be conducted in order to gather information on property lines and landowners along the river.
3. On the Wise County and Russell County sides of the river, the group needs to make sure they have the right of way
4. Consider feasibility study for Scott County and Town of St. Paul

Next Steps:

- Jennifer Puckett will make revisions to the grant proposal and will email a copy of the map which identifies the access point sites the group located.
- Later in the fall, the group will meet to add information on targeted access point sites to the grant proposal; the group hopes to complete this step by the end of the year.
- The group will work to create a firm job description and work plan for the Outdoor Recreation Specialist, and will have several potential access point sites for the specialist to review.
- The group will meet again on November 4th and 5th for the River Place on the Clinch tour in Kyles Ford, TN.

Goal 3 & 4 Action Group: (3) Enhancing Water Quality in the Clinch River, and (4) Develop and Enhance Environmental Education Opportunities for all Community Members in the Clinch River Watershed

Group Participants: Kathy Selvage, Juanita Sneeuwjagt, Josh Larsen, Geoffrey Hensley, Terry Vencil, Kelsey Ewing, Monica Appleby, Chris Clark

Focus of discussion: Enhancing Water Quality (one goal) and Improving Environmental Education (separate goal).

- The group reviewed priority actions outlined in the previous meeting. One of these was the development of a list of organizations and agencies doing water quality testing in the Clinch River that IEN is currently developing to assist the group. The group reviewed a draft version and suggested elements to add, including an explanation of what the water quality levels indicate and the protocols used for conducting the tests (globe testing, chemical testing, etc.). The group decided that the purpose of data was to see what further data was needed, to identify pollution sources and to inform potential action around pollution.
- The group discussed an action that was submitted as part of a recent multi-phase grant proposal to the to the Appalachian Regional Commission around illegal dump removal in the Clinch River, collecting discarded appliances, and enhancing water quality in the

Clinch River. ARC will make decisions about the grant in 2012, and the group discussed submitting additional grant proposals in the future.

- There was discussion about opportunities and potential challenges of splitting into two separate groups for water quality and environmental education, as the goals are two separate but related items. The group reached a consensus to divide into two groups because it would allow members to focus on their interests and work at a faster pace. However, group participants noted that because water quality and environmental education are so closely tied, the groups should maintain consistent communication and continue to meet together as a larger group as well.
- It was also noted that night meetings would likely work better for all participants, but it was left up to meeting chairs to set next meeting dates with the action group members. The facilitators also encouraged the group to develop an agenda prior to the action group meetings and send meeting notes out to the entire group after the meeting so everyone could be kept up to speed even if they aren't able to attend the meeting.

Next steps for achieving the priority actions.

To achieve water quality goals, the group decided that two actions were necessary.

1. A map of Clinch River with water quality data, as well as other information. This tool would ideally be an interactive map that users could explore to learn more about water testing initiatives and data along the Clinch River. The map would be on a website and provide links to other sites with complementary information, and other elements from the Clinch River Strategy could be part of it as well. This would involve:
 - a. Finding existing mapping data, possibly from Virginia DEQ, Virginia Save our Streams, and other groups
 - b. Look at similar existing efforts- (see this website as one example: <http://www.riverventure.org/catawba/index.html>)
 - c. Linking the site to similar or local projects or using another strategy to make it unique and interesting, such as to www.myswva.org. This was discussed in response to a concern that there may not be enough interest in the website alone.
 - d. Connecting map/interactive tour features to environmental education goals is important (and other elements of the Clinch River Strategy, including list water quality information on the website, educational offerings along the river, list access points, etc).
 - e. Recruiting a webmaster
 - f. Recruiting a volunteer to coordinate communication between IEN, Virginia Tech students and others compiling and presenting data
 - i. Suggested to contact Donna Lisby of Appalachian Voices
2. Host a Clinch River Education Forum, likely in spring of 2012. The point of the event would be to highlight Clinch River watershed and water quality information for educators

and community members, including some points on how water quality is linked to economics and to recruit new volunteers for the group or for testing.

- a. It was suggested that it could take place after water quality data is gathered.
- b. Could be used to recruit key environmental educators or activists. Factors which would attract teachers include:
 - i. Inviting a lecturer who is well known.
 - ii. Holding the event in the spring.
 - iii. Providing teacher-specific breakout sessions, workshops, etc.

To achieve environmental education goals, group members decided two actions were necessary:

1. Producing pamphlets, other promotional materials beyond website.
2. Clinch River Educators Forum described above.
3. Creating more locations for education along Clinch River. This would involve:
 - a. Finding people in each community who are in key positions to promote change, especially formal educators.
 - i. One way to do this is to contact the central offices of each county. One member suggested contacting Carol Doss with the Upper Tennessee Round Table to ask about teachers who may be interested.
 - b. Educating teachers about potential for outdoor education centers to meet Virginia Standards of Learning, especially the 6th and 7th grade “meaningful watershed experience” requirement.
 - i. This could be accomplished by inviting teachers to the Educators Forum (see above), where they would learn about outdoor education centers.
 - ii. To learn how teachers are meeting the SOLs, ask each county what they are doing to satisfy watershed requirement. Some organizations known to be helping schools meet SOLs are: Project Estonoa, the Environmental Endowment Fund, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, and Soil and Water District offices.
 - c. Develop environmental education through signage at access points. Members suggested a focus on mussel species types, as well as watershed education at signage/ education points along the Clinch River.

At the end of the meeting, the group decided on co-chairs for the two new groups. Co-chairs will determine next meeting dates with action group participants.

- Water Quality- Chris Clark and Josh Larsen, co-chairs
- Environmental Education- Terry Vencil and Kelsey Ewing, co-chairs

Goal 5 Action Group: Connect Downtown Revitalization and Outdoor Recreation Efforts along the Clinch River, and Expand Entrepreneurship and Marketing Opportunities

Group Participants: Shannon Blevins, Kitty Barker, Travis Perry, Jim Baldwin, Margie Douglass, Buzz Witt, Teresa Puckett, Wilma Sutherland, and Monty Salyer

Focus of the Session: Envision how to foster a regional approach to economic development centered on building and attracting a tourism infrastructure in support of outdoor recreation.

- Participants also expressed a desire to connect localities and capitalize on an opportunity for regional revitalization and rebranding.
- Participants emphasized:
 - The approach of integrating localities is both unique and timely, and this strategy will be viewed favorably by funders and other regional marketing initiatives.
 - This project is one part of an integrated approach (the overall Clinch River Strategy) to economic revitalization, which is already underway, and is helpful to continue to be connected with.
- The “Pearls of the Clinch” language was upheld as an appropriate way to brand the project.

Participants cited the following existing resources:

- The biodiversity / appeal of the Clinch.
- Five existing access points.
- The Crooked Road and Heartwood projects were cited as models and potential partners. For example, participants discussed the possibility of linking blueways to cycling paths on the Crooked Road. They also discussed beginning to market “already in place” aspects of outdoor recreation through Heartwood (with the aid of Heartwood’s marketing budget), although some felt this may be premature.
- Fish and wildlife magazines already market the Clinch and provide maps for outdoor enthusiasts. Existing audiences can be further reached if these publications are promoted through Heartwood. It would also be relatively easy to invite/host travel writers to profile the Clinch for the market that is already accessing it (and would not have complaints with the existing level of access).

Participants cited the following needs:

- Funding to support refurbishment / downtown revitalization
- Maps of existing access points
- A shuttle service to connect tourists to accessible river recreation and towns
- Bait shop location

- “River Rat friendly” businesses in towns that cater to tourists once they leave the river. For example, wi-fi enabled coffee shops, shops and restaurants that stay open after 5pm, etc.
- Young entrepreneurs that understand the adventure tourism market
- Efforts to market entrepreneurship to local youth (middle school and below) and community members
- Business incubator
- Coordination with / information about development bodies at other localities.

Action Items (in order of priority):

1. Convene Regional Meeting of downtown economic development bodies (i.e., main street committees or town councils), like the meeting that launched Crooked Road. Aim should be to pool funding from each community and integrate them into the vision.
2. Connect to Heartwood’s marketing department to promote existing opportunities as appropriate.
3. Gather information on the idea of developing a Shuttle Service.
4. Outreach to Entrepreneurs: form connections and gather information. People Inc., VCEDA, and the Business Incubator idea were all mentioned.
 - short term advertising of existing launch place

Shuttle

- an amenity that reaches a currently missed niche of family recreation
- PTI (shuttle potential) potential transport inc. moving the railroad workers around in vans, get in on the shuttle service
- Shuttle is an entrepreneur opportunity

Next Steps

- Meeting to plan the Regional Meeting. Aim to meet next the 2nd week November at Hillman House. Will pick a date/time over email.
- Buzz: will reach out to PTI to look into the potential of them operating a shuttle service.
- Kitty: will contact existing outfitter to ask about his needs / ideas for a shuttle service; will coordinate contact list for next meeting.
- Monty: will arrange for a presentation of the St. Paul Tomorrow model at the next meeting.

Moving Forward

The last portion of the meeting was used to share the small group discussions with the larger group. A Clinch River community dinner and workshop was held at 5:30 following the Clinch River Strategy meeting. All action groups are meeting in November of 2011 to move forward with priorities and next steps, and the next Clinch River Strategy meeting will be in January of 2012. If you want to be added or removed (or switch) action groups, please email IEN's Pete Guzman at pg4ez@virginia.edu.

Feel free to contact Christine Gyovai at christineg@virginia.edu or 434-982-6464 with any ideas, questions, or concerns about the project.

Meeting Attendees

1 Abbey Ness	21 Josh Larsen	41 Randy Rose
2 Allen Combs	22 Juanita Sneeuwjagt	42 Shane Hanlon
3 Andrew Wallace	23 Karen Davidson	43 Shannon Blevins
4 Angie Robinson	24 Kathy Selvage	44 Skip Skinner
5 Betty Salyers	25 Kathy Stewart	45 Steve Lindeman
6 Buzz Witt	26 Kelsey Ewing	46 Tammy Dotson
7 Caitlin Edenfield	27 Kim Steika	47 Teresa Puckett
8 Chris Clark	28 Kitty Barker	48 Terry Vencil
9 Christine Gyovai	29 Kristina Nell Weaver	49 Todd Christensen
10 Denise Ambrose	30 Laurel Heile	50 Tony Hyde
11 Elizabeth Gilboy	31 Linda Marshall	51 Travis Perry
12 Frank Dukes	32 Lindy Turner	52 Wendy Willis
13 Geoffrey Hensley	33 Lou Ann Wallace	53 Wilma Sutherland
14 Greg Edwards	34 Margie Douglass	
15 Jack McLanahan	35 Michael Wampler	
16 James Sheets	36 Monica Appleby	
17 Jennifer Puckett	37 Monty Salyer	
18 Jerry Venal	38 Pete Guzman	
19 Jim Baldwin	39 Radfert Rhea	
20 Joe Gillespie	40 Ramona Chapman	