

# Clinch River Valley Strategy

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, 1:30 – 4:30 pm

Oxbow Center, St. Paul, Virginia

## Meeting Summary

Facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia

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### Introduction and Overview

Forty-seven people gathered at the Oxbow Center in St. Paul, Virginia on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for a community-wide meeting on planning for outdoor recreation and community revitalization in the Clinch River Valley. The meeting was facilitated by Christine Gyovai and Frank Dukes from the Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN) at the University of Virginia. This meeting was the sixth in a series, originating with the first meeting in September 2010 titled Building Local Economies in Southwest Virginia. The most recent meeting was held on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and previous meeting summaries may be found at the website referenced below.

The facilitators welcomed participants to the meeting, discussed meeting guidelines, and reviewed the agenda and highlights from the previous meeting. Below are highlights from the large group discussion at the meeting, updates from each of the action groups, a summary from each of the discussions of the action groups, and a summary of next steps for the Strategy.

The draft Clinch River Strategy vision statement is:

By 2016, the Clinch River will be recognized as a nationally preserved eco-tourism destination based on its biodiversity, natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities. This project will bring measurable economic success and new business growth to the communities while protecting the unique biology of the natural species surrounding the River Basin.

To accomplish this vision, the five goals of the Clinch River Strategy are:

- Goal 1: Develop a 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

## Action Group Updates

Updates from action groups were shared at the meeting. Updates were also shared in the Steering Committee (which met prior to the large group meeting), which is comprised of chairs for each action group and volunteer participants, and is the coordinating body for the Clinch River Strategy. IEN shares project updates with the Clinch River Strategy contact list, at the project website at [clinchriverva.wordpress.com](http://clinchriverva.wordpress.com), and also on the project's Facebook page.

The following are the updates shared:

- IEN has created and expanded on the project website in order to centralize information. On the website, found at <http://clinchriverva.wordpress.com/>, information about what is currently happening with the Strategy is listed, as well as previous meeting summaries. Also, grants relevant to action groups can be posted on the site.
  - Any action group updates can also be added onto the site. Please contact Christine Gyovai for more information.
- IEN has also created a Facebook page for the Strategy. The page is Clinch River Valley Strategy, and a link to the page can also be found on the website for the project.
- Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) created several GIS maps based on information from the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. CDAC gathered information that was identified on paper maps at the last meeting, and translated that information into maps for the Clinch River Valley Strategy. IEN will distribute those maps to the action groups as well as make them available online at the project website.
- IEN is also exploring the possibility of assisting with creating an interactive map for the project. The purpose of the map would be to identify relevant sites and figures for the project, for instance labeling all the Bed and Breakfasts in the area, the locations of existing outdoor recreation businesses, etc. The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has listings of events and restaurants, and bed and breakfasts on its website. IEN will create a link on the project website to the VTC website as a first step, and continue exploring interactive mapping options.
- Grants: the Blue Moon Fund recently awarded \$60,000 for the Clinch River Strategy, and the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is the fiscal sponsor of the grant. The Appalachia Regional Commission grant is still pending. The grant will be used for several action steps, including: IEN's facilitation and coordination work, illegal dump removal in the river, collecting discarding waste, developing the strategic plan, developing new environmental education signage, and a part-time water quality position.

Participants noted that it would be helpful for grants listed on the Clinch River website to be listed as they are due. The due dates for each grant should be clearly listed, and IEN should send reminders to action groups about deadlines. It was also noted that more photos of the region should be added to the project website and the Facebook page.

## **Action Group Updates**

Afterwards, the chairs of each action group gave updates on the activities each group has been involved in since the last meeting.

### **1. Access Points Action Group**

The Access Points action group has been focused on certain areas for access point redevelopment and establishment from St. Paul downstream to Dungannon. So far, 4 points have been identified: Miller Yard, Carfax, Old Castlewood, and Burnsford. These are target areas, and the action group has been encountering a different set of challenges for each. The group is still waiting for a response to the ARC grant request for funds to install access points at these areas. The group also has been having a lot of discussion about incubator/ Clinch River center sites: one in St. Paul and one in Dungannon (the former Rikemo Lodge). The goal is to allot various uses for the public at these access points. Two of these access points can be developed and marketed as anchors, but there is a need to better determine this through a feasibility study. Such a study is currently being pursued by the Clinch River State Park Action Group.

In response to the update, a participant asked who would be responsible for the access point sites, if negotiations with landowners were successful. According to the action group, the entity responsible would be the locality at those sites. The idea is to work with each locality, especially government entities, for installation and maintenance of the sites. And that entity may differ for each locality: the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) may be the appropriate owner for one site, and the town of St. Paul for another. The important part is that there is open access for the public. However, there are certain restrictions to partnering with DGIF in this venture. DGIF cannot work with sites that collect money. Any access points managed by DGIF and/or owned by the federal government have restrictions to land use. At these sites, only boat access would be allowed, and businesses would not be allowed to operate at those locations.

### **2. Downtown Revitalization and Outdoor Recreation Action Group**

The action group has been working on three different tasks. The first task involves the Entrepreneurship Blueprint that has been developed over the past several months, and focusing on entrepreneurship opportunities in the Clinch River Valley. The first task has involved collecting an inventory of local businesses in the Valley. Once that information is gathered, then the action group can do a gap analysis to see what is missing and what opportunities are there. The action group has also been working on developing a Business Assistance plan that offers business assistance through access to financial resources, development consultations, and more for entrepreneurs.

The second task the action group has been working on is coordinating a town/county regional Clinch River Regional Summit. The Summit will be held from 1:00-5:00 pm on Wednesday, Feb. 29 at the Oxbow Center in St. Paul. The action group is currently working on an agenda.

The action group plans on inviting town officials, administrators, elected officials etc. The purpose of the summit will be to provide best practices from businesses (River Place on the Clinch as an example) and from other similar regional initiatives. Also, the Clinch River Strategy will be presented at the Summit with an invitation for attendees to participate in the Strategy, and all the action groups will be introduced at the Summit.

The other task the group has been working on is developing a list of all properties for sale to see what is available in the Clinch River Valley. The idea is to then help foster a connection with agencies that provide assistance to new potential business owners. The hope is that this can lead to the creation of a Clinch River project blueprint plan for downtown revitalization.

### **3. Environmental Education Action Group**

The action has been working on organizing an educational symposium for teachers in Clinch River Valley counties. The action group is currently sending letters to school superintendents to find out if the symposium can be considered work day for teachers. The symposium will be on the first full week in August, from 8:30 to 5:30 and will be located near the River. The symposium will be about wetlands and the Clinch River watershed. The action group plans on inviting local elementary, middle school and high school educators. Additionally, the action group has been working with Estonsa students to develop new signage for access points along the river.

In response to this update, a meeting participant said DCR and State Parks has education resources available to assist with the Symposium. Other participants suggested making partnerships with local higher education institutions. Another participant suggested that the currently vacant St. Paul High School is another location to consider for hosting the symposium.

### **4. Clinch River State Park Action Group**

The goal of the group is to create a Clinch River State Park. The group has been working with the concept of having hub property: a property that is 600 acres at least which can serve as the starting point for the state park. It is hoped that this hub property would be managed by DCR, and it would be the first property to be developed. Afterwards, other properties can be purchased in order to connect with the “string of pearls” along the river: some areas are already developed, and others will likely be developed in future by the Access Points action group. A Feasibility Study was conducted in 2005 and updated in 2008 by DCR for Russell County, and the group is exploring options to expand the Feasibility Study. The group has developed a Request for Proposals for an expanded Feasibility Study, and will look at the possibility of releasing the Feasibility Study in the near future.

The Feasibility Study would look at costs: cost of facilities, the potential economic benefits of this state park, including benefits to local businesses. But, DCR support is crucial for this study, and the action group is seeking DCR support before they submit the request for the study. The

study will be expensive to produce—as much as \$70,000 - \$100,000. Additionally, the action group will be exploring the economic impact assessment, which is included in the current ARC grant request, for all nearby counties in order to determine how they may benefit from the potential state park.

Next steps for the action group include locating and getting funding resources for this study. Possible funders include: private interests, nonprofits, and government bodies. The group wants to closely coordinate with the Access Points action group as they move forward.

One participant urged the action group to strongly consider a location that is at the nexus of two planning district commissions (LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau PDCs) and by 5 other adjacent communities. Another suggestion was to consider access points in Cleveland and Dungannon. Other participants suggested that the action group approach municipalities that may benefit from the state park and request funding for the study. If the action group can raise money from local communities for the project, then that would send a strong message of support to state elected officials about the idea. Another participant asked about the location of mussel beds, and urged the action group to verify that mussel beds were not located at the potential access points. Finally, another participant suggested the idea of creating a Blueway designation. A Blueway designation for the Clinch River, which could be sought after and obtained today, would help to raise awareness and garner support for the project.

## **5. Water Quality Action Group**

The action group has been discussing the possibility of creating a part-time water quality coordinator position, as funding for this position is in the current Blue Moon and ARC grant proposals. This person would be focused solely on the Clinch River, and would be in charge of creating and distributing outreach materials that more simply relate the water condition of the river. The action group is also collecting water quality data, and they have offered to help to gather and distribute information for other action groups.

One participant commented on the large body of water quality data that already exists, and wondered if the action group was duplicating data. The action group responded that existing water quality data is very scientific and not reader friendly. Thus, one goal of the action group is to make the data more readable to the average citizen. Additionally, since so many groups are doing water testing, it is often difficult to find one location with all the data. The action group hopes to bring the data together and let others see and interpret in the same place. Finally, the group is exploring the possibility of a Clinch River “RiverKeeper” in partnership with the WaterKeeper Alliance, which several state and national organizations also have similar “RiverKeepers”.

## **Small Group Discussion**

After the large group discussion, participants met in small groups by goal areas to further discuss each of the goals with the priority of identifying long-term action steps for each group. After the small group discussions, one person from the group reported back to the larger group on key themes and next steps discussed. A summary of each action group's discussion is provided below.

## **State Park Action Group Summary**

Participants: John Harley, Dave Collett, Claiborne Woodall, Radfert Rhea, Brad Kreps, Melissa Hamilton, Lou Ann Wallace, Samantha Landingham, Steve Lindeman, Esther Thatcher, Frank Dukes

The group discussed the Request for Proposals for a Feasibility Study for the State Park first. The group discussed developing a document to give to Steering Committee about ideas and issues for the State Park, and to hold a panel discussion with the Steering Committee. Questions to address include who will administer RFP? A non-profit? Planning District? Who is the fiscal agent for the group? There was discussion about this being a regional agent.

Study area for the RFP: The group discussed that the proposed study should steer them to a particular point, using data and information, but that the group should not solely make those large decisions about location for the State Park. The goal is to identify where would be the most likely and best place to obtain a large enough piece of land for a park. Right now, looks to be between Puckett's Hole and Speers Ferry. The upstream end can go only so far because of floatability. The main questions: Where do we locate the hub property? What is the economic impact? This second question can pertain to sites off-river but still pertinent.

"Linear" should be taken out of title. It's confusing and not completely correct. This would be a state park that take advantage of blueways nodes along the river (string of pearls). It could be called an "Anchor" park"? In practical terms (equipment, etc.), it would be better to have one hub rather than multiple nodes for the park.

The group discussed developing a general fact sheet that to be used for outreach with the General Assembly (this was completed). A more detailed fact sheet will be developed in the near future. There is a need for a contact person for the ideas so legislators know who is involved in the effort, and that it is a volunteer effort (Linda Marshall was contacted to see if she can be the contact person). There is need to have a clear and unified identity as an effort/ strategy/ group.

Between now and mid-April (the General Assembly meeting), the group will we need to tighten up budget for study and develop a fundraising plan, with getting feedback from the Steering Committee first. Delegate Johnson is very supportive of the effort. One idea is to set up a lunch

with delegates, hosted by Delegate Johnson at Heartwood. Members could participate in this or other receptions, including state employees (they can't promote something, but can participate). The group will need to coordinate with the other action groups of Clinch River Strategy for interacting with Delegates. This might be a Steering Committee item.

The group noted the need to illustrate that they can start find funding for the Feasibility Study, with a need to start talking among their own networks to get some commitments. The cost of study will be reduced if the study area is smaller. But this might be a catch-22 if the group can't get commitments from network without knowing the proposed areas. The study could be done by professors and other researchers who have time during summers to do contract work, but estimates are needed from discussions with potential contractors. There may be a need to keep a meeting with legislators simple and open-ended about short-term goals. If the group tried to get support from multiple planning districts, they would need to enlarge study, making it more expensive.

The current part of the grant proposal is \$12,500 from ARC (to whole Clinch River Strategy) for an economic impact analysis. A funding plan is needed, as well as proposals to see what the expense range will be. Some local industries such as Dominion Power may want to contribute funding as well. A highlight of the group's key next steps is below in the large group discussion.

### **Access Points Action Group Summary**

Participants: Betty Salyer, Cathy Johnson, Teresa Puckett, Kathy Stewart, Greg Bailey, Kyle Fletcher, Christine Steele, Debbi Fry, Randy Rose (co-chair), Pete Guzman

The group objective was to discuss two subjects: one was to discuss the long-term action plan of the group; the other was to discuss recent updates and other short-term action steps.

The group discussion focused on identifying the long-term action plans for the group. Before identifying plans, the group started by identifying the goals that their long term action plans should be guided by. The following goals were listed:

#### Goals

- Optimizing the public's ability to use public access points
  - Having several public access points with limited restrictions
  - This may differ by county, depending on the visions for each respective locality
- Complete the "String of Pearls"
  - The "string of pearls" refers to the connection between access points. This goal involves establishing a form of coordination between each of the access points developed and renovated along the Clinch River.
  - This goal also involves identifying more possible access points to be developed. So far, the action group has identified 4 access point sites: respectively in Miller Yard, Carfax, Old Castlewood, and Burnsford.

- Communicating with key stakeholders of each access point locality
  - Identifying the locality opportunities and visions for each access point
    - Includes determining the cost estimate for each access point, and identifying property owners who may be approached for land easements.

The group then discussed a timeline for completing these goals. Based on the amount of time it has taken the action group thus far to identify 4 access point sites as well as other relevant data such as cost estimates, the group concluded that it would take about another year to add another series of 4 or more potential access points.

In order to accomplish these goals, the group identified resources necessary in successfully realizing these goals. Two resources were identified:

1. Outdoor Recreation Specialist
  - a. This is a full time position that the action group is currently seeking grant funding for.
  - b. This individual would be responsible for identifying other potential access points, as well as communicating with other site localities in order to determine the appropriate next steps for establishing/renovating an access point site.
2. Feasibility Study
  - a. The State Park action group is currently seeking funding to conduct a regional feasibility study of establishing a Clinch River State Park. Relevant figures that may be estimated in this potential study include: the increased number of visitors that the area may enjoy if a state park is established, and the economic effects of this on other local businesses.
    - i. Information from this study has the potential to greatly enhance funding opportunities for the Access Points group.

Finally, the group discussed the need to maximize financial resources by searching for other partners to aid with this project. The following organizations were listed as potential partners/funders to approach:

- American Electric Power
- Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Jewell Smokeless

As of the last Access Points group meeting, the following needs were identified:

- Fiscal Agents needed to apply for future grant funds, including handling paperwork. Found it to be a challenge with last grant.
- Coordination with other Action Groups. Solution identified for that so far is platform created for Steering Committee. Steering Committee will handle overall coordination with groups, however moves specific to Access Points will be discussed as a group. Steering Committee will communicate regularly.

Public Access Points Updates:

- Jennifer Puckett has created draft of outdoor recreation specialist position description. Will circulate to others after this meeting.

- Miller yard under way. No concerns for that area. Just waiting for the grant.
  - Skip Sheets, who would be contact for identification of county manager
- Old Castlewood: still working on it. Need to touch base with VDOT. Landowner must be spoken to.
- Still need to identify county manager for Russell County Supervisor.
  - Lou Ann Wallace will be working on this.
- Burnsford: Found out landowner name except for one section. Might be mineral use, so are researching it. Real owner found, but haven't spoken to.
  - Kathy Stewart worked on this, and Lou Ann agreed to help
- Carfax site: does access to this site exist? Site was identified by Frank Kilgore has been negotiating access to site for "qualified individuals". More clarity is needed on that term. The group speculated that the term referred to a licensed outfitter. However, if the access point site has such limitations, the site may not be a feasible alternative.
  - Randy will contact Frank for further details
  - On a side note, the Carfax site is a good site because it will not need much money for development. It is public-use ready.

Other relevant updates include:

- Two other potential access points have been identified. One access point is located in the Town of Cleveland, and the other is E. Dillan Community Park.
- Changing the name of "Incubator" Site. Randy brought this up to the group, but no alternative names were suggested.
- Rikemo Lodge site still for sale.
- Kathy Stewart has sample easement. This document will be made available to everyone in group to use as sample.

The next meeting for the Access Points group was tentatively agreed on for the following date: Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. If anyone in the group is interested in hosting, contact Randy (action group chair).

### **Water Quality Subcommittee Meeting Notes**

Participants: Chris Clark (co-chair), Josh Larsen (co-chair), Monica Appleby, Kathy Selvage, Shane Hanlon, Skip Skinner, Abbey Ness

- Chris began the meeting by identifying four current goals for the group
  - Goal 1. Establish a paid coordinator to assist water quality group. This person could work within an existing nonprofit.
  - Goal 2. Create user-friendly water quality resources
  - Goal 3. Compile and distribute water quality data
  - Goal 4. Host watershed literacy workshops for community members and advocacy groups and members
- Comment that there is a need for clarification of group purpose and goals
  - The group agreed that while improving water quality is the overarching goal, public outreach is the most important means of reaching that goal.

- The group identified improved ecological integrity, public health and recreational opportunities as main reasons to enhance regional water quality.
    - The group agreed that articulating these outcomes is important when working with community members.
  - There is a need to update the mission statement for the group to emphasize public outreach as a priority.
- The group decided that they wanted to address local citizens and leaders with their outreach efforts. Youth education will not be a priority for now, because the environmental education subcommittee is reaching out to local schools and students.
- The group then brainstormed about the watershed literacy workshops (Goal 4).
  - Suggestion that they would like a symposium for general public
  - Suggestion to tag along with citizen monitoring trainings or meetings conducted by the Clinch Coalition, Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and the Virginia Save Our Streams groups.
- When discussing water quality resources (Goal 2), the group identified two user-friendly options:
  - Watershed report cards= other watersheds have created their own metrics for water quality using these report cards. They give a grade to how sections of the river measure up according to each parameter.
    - Report cards would be located at access points.
    - Could be collaboration with environmental education group to include report card as part of education signage.
    - Josh will work on creating report card based on available data.
  - Collaborative mapping = Group stressed the importance of having an interpretive key to allow users to understand data.
    - Abbey will investigate resources and possible partnerships with Virginia Water Monitoring Council, groups already doing collaborative mapping, etc.
  - Newspaper insert = The group agreed that a newspaper insert would be a good outreach tool. The Guest River Group has done this in the past with success.
  - Throughout the meeting, the group discussed the importance of choosing appropriate water quality parameters. Conductivity was specifically mentioned as an important parameter that is overlooked in the area. There is a connection between conductivity and the presence of water fauna, so it is an important measure for ecological integrity and should be included in the report card.
- The group reviewed goals for the paid coordinator position (Goal 1) and decided thus:
  - The group would aim for a \$40,000-50,000 budget for this position
    - This budget was suggested because it is what Watauga County, NC uses for a similar position.
  - Chris will look into a partnership with the Waterkeeper Association
    - If partnership is not possible, the group will attempt to emulate the Waterkeeper approach (a water quality-focused voice for the river that is impartial to specific localities).
  - The group will seek grant opportunities for funding this position for at least one to two years.

- Action Steps
  - Look into Waterkeeper connection= Chris
  - Analyze water quality data and create report card= Josh
  - Look into Grant opportunities= Monica
  - Find collaborative mapping resources and partners= Abbey
  - Change language of water quality group purpose= TBD

### **Environmental Education Action Group**

Participants: Terry Vencil, Juanita Kelly, Ganell Marshall, Helen Lewis, and Christine Gyovai

The group discussed several key goals and next steps to move this goal forward.

- Clinch River Education Symposium will be August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, from 8:00 - 4:30. The focus will be on the Clinch River watershed, wetlands, and the use of the Clinch watershed as a vehicle to teach VA SOL's. The Oxbow Center is being explored as a location for the Symposium. Estonoa can be used as an example of an outdoor classroom.
  - Present study guide at the Symposium (see below).
  - Brochures are being developed to give to teachers, and key speakers are currently being identified.
  - Develop a session at Symposium for teachers of the study guide "clean glass of water" (see below).
  - Partner with other regional teachers including Kevin Farmer and Diana Withen.
- Develop Environmental Education signage at key access points on the Clinch River (include one on History of the Clinch)
  - Project Estonoa students are currently working on signage and they include themes such as river flora, fauna, fish, animals, mussels.
  - Develop a sign for the History of the Clinch as well.
  - Explore tourist sign at Dungannon Depot about Flannery Farm and the Native American village that was there.
- Gather stories about the History of the Clinch River (1-2 years)
  - Collecting stories, pictures, and oral histories (IEN could assist with this if needed); build on stories gathered at Oct. 4 meeting. Gather stories of points of interest along the river, stories of what has happened in the river in the past.
  - Partner with historians and the Southwest Virginia Historical Society (currently gathering short articles for meeting the 4<sup>th</sup> Sat. in March). Ganell Marshall will help work on this.
  - Consider contacting Jerry Couch, Dr. Flannery, Anita Boyd, Leroy Hilton, and others. Connect with Local Youth Groups, Grace House on the Mountain, AmeriCorps, areas schools and youth. Focus on connecting with youth to help gather stories.

- Consider acquiring funding for paid positions to gather stories, and to develop history and to cover expenses of those gathering stories.
  - Consider different formats for printing history (digital/ print), short articles.
- Develop an education program and a study guide called a “Clean Glass of Water”. This is based on a white paper Helen Lewis wrote and would include developing whole class projects for students around understanding the water and water sources, including tracing water sources. A link to the essay may be found at the website: <http://www.appalachiantransition.net/essays>. This could include focusing on where the water students drink at home comes from. This would be a focus on the Clinch River, and look at points of pollution and what is entering the river for its entire length.
- Focus on what is in the river from the Headwaters and down in the Clinch River
  - Develop a curriculum guide for teachers- study guide for elementary through high schools. Perhaps have a presentation on a “club day” at area schools.
  - Engage teachers and youth
  - Connect with Standards of Learning (Clinch River SOL)
  - Helen Lewis will help work on this
- Develop an Ecological Center on the Clinch River. Connect with the Estonoa Learning Center as it is developed. Consider lodging/ hostel accommodations and other educational opportunities at the Center as well.
- 3 – 10 year time frame
  - Need significant resources and staffing to make it happen
  - Location needs to be in a town near the Clinch River
  - Connect with colleges including, Ferrum, MECC, VHCC, Emory + Henry, ETSU, UVa at Wise, Radford, Appalachia State Univ. and others.
  - Look at potential buildings that could be adapted and used for the Center (buildings in Dungannon, former St. Paul High School, others).

The Environmental Education group meets the first Wednesday of every month at 6:00 pm at Estonoa at the Learning Center in St. Paul, VA.

### **Downtown Revitalization Action Group**

Debby Spencer, Kitty Barker, Doug Jackson, Shannon Blevins, Buzz Whit, Todd Christensen, Ernie Roberts, Kathy LaPlante, Theresa Puckett, Margie Douglass, Jim Baldwin

Regional Summit for local government representatives: The Action Team is hosting a regional meeting to introduce the Clinch River project to local governmental officials. The Summit will be held at the Oxbow Center on Feb. 29th. Invitations will be sent to the local officials next

week and via public service announcements on the radio, weekly newspaper announcements will be placed in the region. Kitty will continue to work on the agenda for the event.

**Entrepreneur Blueprint:** Shannon Blevins reported that the Blueprint document should be complete and printed in 60 days. A key outcome of the Blueprint is to have regional resources at one location to simplify the business process for entrepreneurs.

**Business Data Base:** Shannon Blevins has a team that is developing a database of businesses along the Clinch: These businesses are relative tourism, and outdoor recreation service businesses that include gas stations, banks, pharmacies, lodging, food, etc. After the list is complete, the group can do a gap analysis.

**Inventory of Business:** The team will send a copy to Chambers of Commerce, IDA, and match to Virginia.org to develop a comprehensive list. Next steps will be an outreach to those businesses to evaluate their needs. Perhaps the web site can have a running list and localities can keep it updated. The team plans a review in 18 months. The team will have the database ready for review by the Feb. 29 Regional Summit. Currently there are 250 businesses on the list.

**Entrepreneur Visits:** Team members met with five entrepreneurs that Ernie facilitated. It was suggested that the team collect Entrepreneur testimony and success stories, and place it on the Clinch River web site.

**Resources:** The group discussed methods to place resources on the web site and other ways to have information at the fingertips of entrepreneurs.

**Entrepreneur Position:** in partnership with VTC and UVA Wise: The Virginia Tourism Corporation has approached the UVA-Wise Office of Economic Development to share a part-time position to develop and implement an Entrepreneur Initiative in Far Southwest Virginia. The two entities are currently working on an MOU for the shared position. If anyone knows of good candidates for this position, please contact Shannon Blevins, Randy Rose or Kitty Barker.

**List of properties for sale:** The action team is asked to send property photos and descriptions to Shannon Blevins who will create of list of available business property and land along the Clinch.

### **Moving Forward – large group discussion**

The last portion of the meeting was used to share the small group discussions with the larger group. Next steps and actions for each of the action groups from the small group report out are below:

**Downtown Revitalization:** Next meeting—Feb. 6 at 10:00 at the Hillman House in St. Paul.

- Develop packet for action teams for Feb. 29 Summit

- Develop business inventory of all tourism-related and service businesses along Clinch. Will post these to the website, and will pass list by Chamber of commerce, etc. for corrections
- Will continue to identify gaps where businesses or services are needed, and then will try to attract these businesses.
- Promote and host Feb. 29 Regional Clinch River Summit at the Oxbow Center in St. Paul.

**Environmental Education:** Next meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month, 6:00 pm, Project Estonoa Learning Center in St. Paul.

- Clinch River Education Symposium in August 2012 (underway)
- Study guide and clean water curriculum for teachers: “A clean glass of water for every student.” Focus on the headwaters on down of the Symposium. Present it at the August Symposium (1-2 years).
- Planned: access points educational signage (underway)
- Collection of the History of Clinch River. Timeline: 1-2 years. Work with Historical societies, youth for collecting oral histories (get grant to create paid positions for youth).
- Develop ecological center on the Clinch River. Would involve significant resources. Connected with colleges, etc. (3-10 years).

**State Park:** Next meeting to be determined.

3 key components: RFP, fact sheet, meeting with area legislators.

- **Fact sheet:** currently being developed.
- **RFP:** developed in draft form, would like to vet this with steering committee and other chairs. Raised question of defining ourselves and identifying ourselves. Need to transition from loose group to a stronger identity.
- **Meeting with legislators:** We need to clearly define scope of study, likely cost. Not a linear state park, but rather a hub with many access points around a blueway.  
\*comment from group: Need clarity for size and scope of park in communicating about it.

**Access Points:** Our next meeting is scheduled for February 17<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m., possibly at the Hillman House in St. Paul, VA.

- Key issues about 4 access points: identifying landowners, other land ownership issues.
- Incubator “River Place on Clinch” model
- Need to identify the String of Pearls for the whole Clinch River.
- The need for assistance to look at the whole Clinch River in order to move things along faster: through other agency? Need to look at meetings in other communities. IEN can assist with that if desired.

**Water Quality:** Conference call: Wednesday, February 15 at 10 A.M. 1-270-400-2000, access code 4731691.

- Explore WaterKeeper connection for Clinch River area
- Case studies from around the area / Virginia / US on what is needed to get WaterKeeper and the benefits
- Collecting and processing water quality data in a simple, easy to read format. Goal is watershed report cards.
- Looking into grant opportunities.
- Collaborative mapping, with easy-to-read format.

Two ideas were presented as a way to engage more community members in the process:

- Invite area youth to participate in the Strategy through promoting it at a series of floats the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is hosting
- Invite people to participate in the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Redbud Festival Canoe Race

If anyone would like to be added or removed from an action group or if anyone would like to join the steering committee, please email IEN's Pete Guzman at [pg4ez@virginia.edu](mailto:pg4ez@virginia.edu). A list of meeting attendees is on the next page.

The next strategic meeting for the project will be April 4, 2012. Feel free to contact Christine Gyovai at [christineg@virginia.edu](mailto:christineg@virginia.edu) or 434-982-6464 with any ideas, questions, or concerns about the project.

## Meeting Attendees

1 Abbey Ness	19 Ganell Marshall	37 Radfert Rhea
2 Angie Robinson	20 Helen Lewis	38 Randall Rose Samanthan
3 Betty Salyer	21 Jim Baldwin	39 Landingham
4 Bob Harrison	22 John Hartley	40 Shane Hanlon
5 Brad Kreps	23 John Kilgore	41 Shannon Blevins
6 Buzz Witt	24 Josh Larsen	42 Skip Skinner
7 Cathy Johnson	25 Juanita Kelly	43 Steve Lindeman
8 Chris Clark	26 Kathy LePlante	44. Teresa Puckett
9 Christine Gyovai	27 Kathy Salvage	45 Terry Vencil
10 Christine Steele	28 Kathy Stewart	46 Todd Christensen
11 Claiborne Woodall	29 Kitty Barker	47 Wilma Sutherland
12 David H. Collett	30 Lou Ann Wallace	
13 Debbi Fry	31 Margie Douglass	
14 Debby Spencer	32 Melissa Hamiton	
15 Doug Jackson	33 Mikaela Campbell	
16 Ernie Roberts	34 Monica Appleby	
17 Esther Thatcher	35 Pam Vance	
18 Frank Dukes	36 Pete Guzman	