

Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee
07 April 2025, 5:00pm EST
Agenda

Call to order & roll call

Mission and purpose of the Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee (LCWAC), as resolved September 23, 2004.

Minutes of previous meetings

Proposed Agenda for this meeting:

1. ***Acknowledgement of and remarks by fellow citizens present, and recent public interactions and/or local press reported by LCWAC members – All.***
 - a. **Disposals** at radiator repair shop on Johnson St. – Pete or Willow?
 - b. **Riparian buffer** at diesel repair shop on Middlebrook Rd. – Pete or Willow?
 - c. **Sewer main break** behind Staunton High School – Randolph or Fred?
2. ***Ongoing monthly E. Coli testing of 12 sites throughout the Lewis Creek Watershed, by City of Staunton, Department of Public Works – All***

Fred has recently requested 9 additional test sites to be added:

Lewis Creek at Bridge Street

Lewis Creek at Church Street

Lewis Creek at New Hope Road and Commerce Road

Lewis Creek at New Hope Road and Statler Blvd

Buttermilk Spring at the intersection of Montgomery, Stuart, and Peck streets

Gum Spring Branch in GHP between the Gypsy Hill Express & the Duckpond

Asylum Creek at Ritchie Blvd

Asylum Creek's secondary tributary at Bessie Weller & Charles streets

Opie Creek behind Staunton High School

3. ***Remediation of PCBs in the Lewis Creek Watershed*** – Fred has previously spoken with most stakeholders, including Buckingham Branch, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), DEQ, and EPA, but not CSX or their consultant.

EPA Project Manager Ruth Prince recently reported that she is still waiting to receive CSX's full draft of their "**Risk-Based Disposal Approval Application**" (**RBDA**), which was previously planned to be received by EPA by early 2nd Quarter, 2025. CSX's RBDA will include details about the soil remedy, methods to safely excavate the PCB-contaminated soils, and all safeguards necessary to protect both human health and the environment. Further, Ruth made the following statement in her most recent response: "*However, we have lost personnel, and I have more*

responsibilities now. I honestly can't commit to any review timeframe. All we can say is that we will do our best".

Next steps will then include:

- a. ***EPA will initiate a 30-day public comment period*** through a notice published in our local News Leader.
- b. ***LCWAC will host our own local public forum*** - Ruth is amenable and willing to provide sufficient advance notice to LCWAC, so that we can time our public forum to ***serve as a local kickoff to the EPA 30-day public comment period.***
- c. If substantial comments are received from the public, then ***EPA will also conduct their own official public meeting here.***

4. Future Visions of Daylighted Streams – Randolph, Coye & Fred

- a. **JMU Spring 2024 & 2025 Architecture Design Classes - *Reimagining Staunton's Wharf*** – JMU Prof. Traci Wile – past & future meetings & events:
 - i. **Spring 2024 Interim Review** @ Staunton Smith Center – 22Mar2024
 - ii. **Spring 2024 Final Review** @ Staunton Smith Center – 26Apr2024
 - iii. **Listening Session w/ Wharf Owners** @ Ox-Eye Winery – 13Aug2024
 - iv. **Walk the Wharf meeting with JMU Traci Wile & class** – 07Feb2025
 - v. **JMU Student meetings with Staunton Environmental Programs & SDDA** – 28Feb2025
 - vi. **Reimagine, Reenvision, Reinvent, Redesign** – JMU Concept Design Proposals at Staunton Augusta Art Center, 05 April 2025, 10am-4pm, and 06 April 2025, 10am-2pm
- b. **Wharf structural issues in Spring 2025** – Randolph spoke on behalf of LCWAC to Staunton City Council on 13 March 2025, urging consideration of daylighting the Wharf, and as part of addressing the recent disclosure of structural issues; suggest we continue community engagement about daylighting, and including collaborating with past & future JMU students, local landscape architects & designers, local artists, and a possible collaboration with MBU at the Wharf

5. Education & Youth Projects – Fred

Trout Unlimited "*Trout in the Classroom*" (TIC) in Staunton Public Schools -now permanent to SPS 5th Grade curriculum. 2025 planning is underway as follows below. SPS issuing a press release about the Spring Brook Trout releases soon.

Friday, 11 April 2025 - Bessie Weller Elementary - 5th Grade - Paul Bugas + other FOMR & LCWAC members will be supporting teacher Ashley Cole with her class's *Brook Trout release* into Asylum Creek, in the Weller Woods Outdoor Classroom behind the school

Tuesday, 22 April 2025 - Shelburne Middle School - 6th Grade - FOMR + LCWAC will be supporting teacher Kirsten Evans with her class's *Brook Trout release* into the Middle River headwaters creek at BSA Camp Shenandoah in Swoope

Friday, 02 May 2025 - Ware Elementary - 5th Grade - their original release site of Gum Spring in Gypsy Hill Park is still under construction, so FOMR & LCWAC members will again be supporting teacher Shane Brubaker with his class's *Brook Trout release* into Christian's Creek on FOMR member Nancy Stevenson's farm, off of Barterbrook Road in Stuarts Draft.

Friday, 16 May 2025 - Bessie Weller Elementary - 4th Grade - Paul Bugas, Lacy Dean, plus other FOMR & LCWAC members will be leading and supporting this *benthic demonstration* in Asylum Creek, in the Weller Woods Outdoor Classroom behind the school

Fall 2025 Planning – Introduction of TU-TIC Program at McSwain Elementary

6. **Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) – Annual Clean the Bay Day (CBD) - -Saturday, 07 June 2025, 9am-12 Noon** – Fred will be visiting Staunton's Sister City in Romania that weekend. **We need someone to take the Overall Lead to interface with CBF, and three Site Leads to interface at**
 - a. **Gum Springs Branch** in Gypsy Hill Park – Skyline Rotary & JMU Valley Scholars,
 - b. **Asylum Creek** at Bessie Weller Elementary – Staunton Rotary
 - c. **Lewis Creek** behind Columbia Gas – FOMR, and at VSDB – Shenandoah Valley Club for the Deaf
 - d. **Buttermilk Spring** at Jones Garden – YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps
 - e. **West Beverley Street**, from Valley Mission to Food Lion – West End Business Association
7. **LCWAC + FOMR** – continued partnership and collaboration between **Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee and Friends of the Middle River**, including expanded water quality testing programs - Benthic, E. coli, Environmental, Nutrient
 - a. **Report on the recent FOMR meeting** – issue raised about Staunton's updated pump station near Frank's Mill relative to agricultural withdrawals - **Mason**

FOMR consulted with DEQ Trevor Lawson, who provided the following:

- i. Currently both the City of Staunton and agricultural withdrawals meet the exclusion criteria listed within 9VAC25-210-310.
- ii. In general, non-tidal surface water withdrawals below one million gallons per month are excluded from the permitting requirement.

- iii. While some facilities may not be required or are excluded from a surface water withdrawal permit, any users who fall within the thresholds of the Annual Water Withdrawal Reporting Regulation requirements will submit their withdrawal volumes to DEQ each year. This data is critical to the development of our modeling and analysis capabilities to evaluate streamflow and water supply availability across the Commonwealth.
 - b. **Fred consulted with Willow**, who consulted with:
 - i. **Staunton City Engineer** – Staunton has grandfathered permits from 80+ years ago; the work was done with minimal, if any impacts to the Middle River; and the water source is the spring there, not the river
 - ii. **Staunton Public Works Director - Dave Irvin**, who said he believed that the work will not have any impact on the Middle River – **Willow will elaborate to LCWAC**
 - c. **Expansion of FOMR's Benthic Monitoring Program within Staunton's Lewis Creek Watershed** – to be managed locally by LCWAC – **Mason & Randolph**
 - d. **Nutrient & Environmental Testing** – Joint Zoom call between **SMRWA** and LCWAC was held on Friday, 07Mar2025 – discussed possible adoption of St. Mary's River Watershed **"BOB" test kits**; – **Randolph & Fred**
 - e. **VA DEQ Reporting** – possible future reporting of LCWAC nitrogen, phosphorus & sediment test results to DEQ - **Randolph**
 - f. **FOMR Members continue to volunteer to help LCWAC with both TU-TIC and CBF-CBD** – planning for **Spring 2025** Staunton schools' trout releases and CBF-CBD stream cleanup on **Saturday, 07Jun2025** – **Fred**
8. **Consideration for Adoption of a Riparian Buffer or Stream Protection Overlay (SPO) District** – **Randolph** – Should we pursue City Council adoption of a zoning overlay to properties with either frontage or include within the property any of the streams within Staunton city limits, that would require riparian buffer protection of the streams? See a **zoning ordinance** adopted by Rappahannock County here: http://rappahannockco-va.elaws.us/code/coor_ptii_ch170_artv_sec170-45.2 , and see attached for a **model riparian overlay** prepared by Brandywine Conservancy and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association.
9. **Stream Naming Project**, for consistency across Lewis Creek Watershed – **Doug**
- a. Peyton's Creek versus Buttermilk Spring?
 - b. Peyton's Creek versus Gum Springs Branch?
 - c. Creek running behind Staunton High School – Opie Creek?
10. **Staunton's Adopt-a-Stream Program** – **Fred** - Can be accessed on City of Staunton website here: <https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/community-development/environmental-programs-division/adopt-a-stream-program>

- i. **Shenandoah Valley Club of the Deaf (SVCD) @ VSDB / Lewis Creek – *Lead project participant***; two (2) signs installed at VSDB; twice-annual cleanups planned for April & June 2025, with increase to 3 cleanups in 2026– **Fred**

Possible additions to the program – *Spring 2025 planning*:

- ii. **Peyton’s Creek / Buttermilk Spring along Stuart Street at Jones Garden and/or Lewis Creek at YMCA Farm on New Hope Road - YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps – Stephanie Mason (YMCA Youth Volunteer Coordinator & SPS School Board)**
- iii. **Asylum Creek from Weller Woods to the Villages – Staunton Rotary Club (the “Noon Club”)**
- iv. **Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ Stuart Hall Ballfields - Stuart Hall STUwards Club**
- v. **Unnamed (Opie?) Creek running behind SHS through their Nature Trail Project - Staunton High School’s “EARL Club”, led by Nate Lawrence**
- vi. **Lewis Creek east of Bells Lane – Middle River Outfitters**
- vii. **Other local neighborhood interests – *significant additional sections*:**
 - 1. **Asylum Creek, neighborhood upstream from Weller Woods – Phillips St?**
 - 2. **Peyton’s Creek / Buttermilk Spring, Maple Street neighborhood**
 - 3. **Lewis Creek, Maple Street neighborhood**

Consideration of future agendas & possible guest speakers for upcoming meetings:

Spring 2025 – Darren Smith, Executive Director, Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA)

Spring 2025 – Ruth Prince, PhD Toxicologist, EPA Project Manager (via Zoom)

Spring/Summer 2025 – LCWAC Public Forum about PCBs in Lewis Creek – local kick-off of EPA final draft of CSX’s “Risk-Based Disposal Approval Application” (RBDAA), and the ensuing 30-day comment period immediately after. Possible venues – Rotary Pavilion in Montgomery Hall Park, or Gymnasium in Gypsy Hill Park

Summer 2025 – EPA Public Forum about PCBs in Lewis Creek – in response to comments received during the 30-day public comment period to the EPA final draft of CSX’s “Risk-Based Disposal Approval Application” (RBDAA); Possible venues – Rotary Pavilion in Montgomery Hall Park, or Gymnasium in Gypsy Hill Park

LCWAC meeting adjournment.

Primary resources for continuing reference by LCWAC:

Decision Rationale of Total Maximum Daily Loads for Aquatic Life Use Impairment on Lewis Creek in Augusta County, Virginia, as published by US EPA, Water Protection Division on 02 August 2006 (9 pages)

Consideration of UVA Green Infrastructure Strategies for Staunton, VA, as published December 11, 2009 (Water Resources Policies & Strategies, pages 91-116)

Consideration of UVA Lewis Creek Subwatershed – Stormwater Management Site Analysis & Masterplan, as published 2011 (46 pages)

City of Staunton, Virginia MS4 Program Plan 2018-2023, as updated 4/29/2020; General Permit No. VAR040132, for the Virginia Stormwater Management Program, General Permit Registration Statement, for Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4).

City of Staunton, Virginia MS4 Annual Report, dated 9/27/2023, for Permit Cycle 2, Year 5, -01 July 2022 through 30 June 2023; General Permit No. VAR040132

Both preceding documents can be downloaded from City of Staunton website here:
<https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/community-development/environmental-programs-division/ms4-program>

PCB Total Maximum Daily Load Development for Lewis Creek, Staunton, Virginia, as prepared by Department of Biological Systems Engineering, Virginia Tech & Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and as submitted by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, ***Draft Report*** published June 2021 (80 pages, plus Appendices)

Trout Unlimited's "Trout in the Classroom" (TIC) – Trout in the Classroom (TIC) enhances science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics curriculums. Students study and raise trout from eggs to fingerlings (small fish) in a coldwater aquarium during the school year. It is a unique opportunity used to teach the relevance of watersheds. Where permitted, the program culminates with a field trip to a community stream, river, lake, or pond where students release their fish into a state-approved location. **Partnerships are at the Core of the Program's Success.** In many areas, Trout Unlimited chapter and council volunteers facilitate the program in partnership with state or federal agencies at public and/or private schools. However, a variety of partnerships exist between other non-profits, agencies, private businesses, and individuals to make the program happen. See the TU-TIC website here:

<https://www.troutintheclassroom.org/>

Staunton City Schools - Proposal for Staunton High School Outdoor Learning Space and Nature Trail

Brandywine Conservancy and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association - Model Riparian Overlay