

Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee
02 February 2026, 5:00pm EST
Minutes

Call to order & roll call

Members present: Fred Blanton (Chair), Doug Wolfe, Randolph Bertin, Tina Haug

Members absent: Coye Heard, Nicholas Palacio, Mary Jo Kricorian, Mason Kilbourn

Do we have a quorum? No.

City Council present: Jeff Overholtzer

City Staff present: Willow Hughes, Rodney Rhodes

Members of the public present: Josh Cole (YMCA), Steve Maxwell (Shenandoah Green - Staunton Tree Stewards)

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

- 1. Conserve and actively promote** the improvement of the waters of Lewis Creek;
- 2. Research and evaluate** water quality and environmental issues involving or impacting Lewis Creek;
- 3. Provide recommendations** to conduct or contract for studies that identify, analyze and prioritize alternatives and strategies for improvements to Lewis Creek;
- 4. Create a plan to implement** actions and recommendations to improve the overall health of Lewis Creek;
- 5. Educate the general public** as to practical steps and activities that can be put in place to protect the Lewis Creek Watershed;
- 6. Provide recommendations** for expanded recreational uses of Lewis Creek, adjacent riparian lands and adjoining areas;
- 7. Identify funding sources** to achieve objectives of the implementation plan, including federal, state and private grant funds.
- 8. Make reports and recommendations** to the City Manager or City Council to further these purposes.

Minutes of previous meetings - Willow

Proposed Agenda for this meeting:

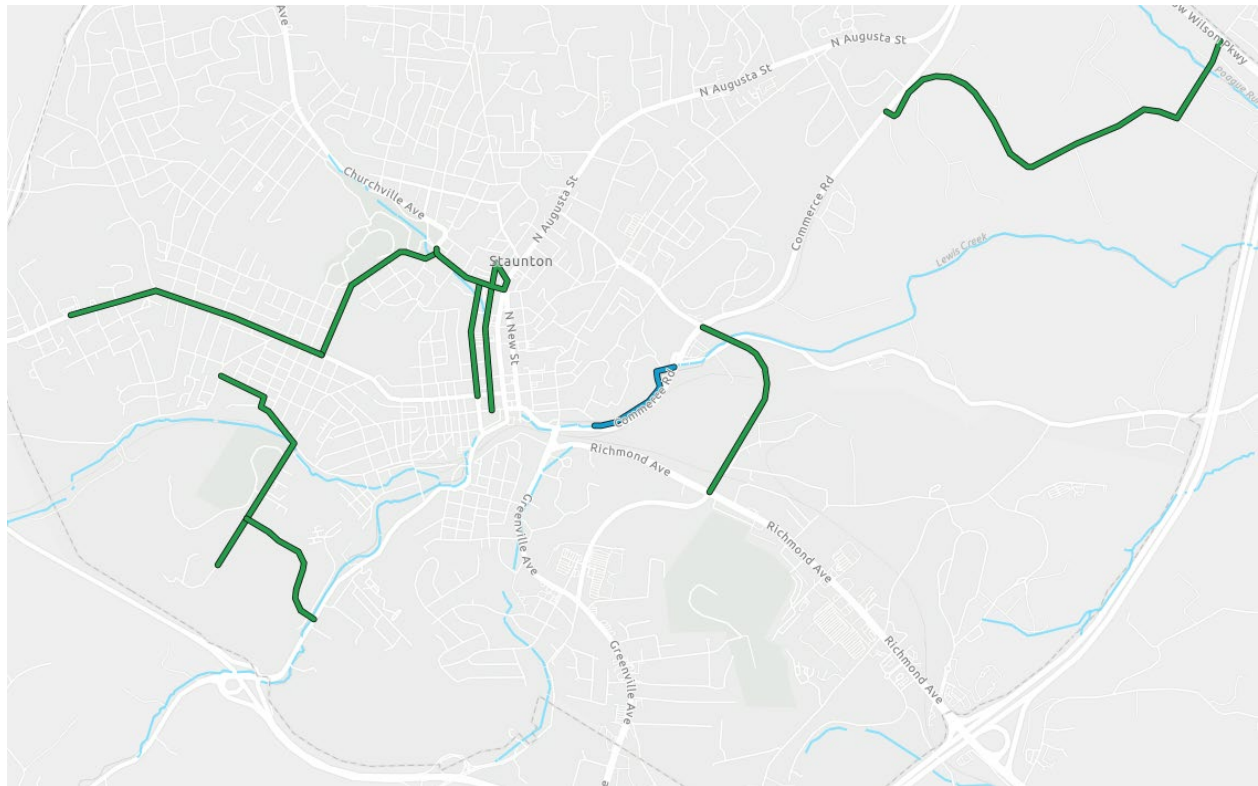
- 1. *Acknowledgement of and remarks by fellow citizens present, and recent public interactions and/or local press reported by LCWAC members – All.***
- 2. City of Staunton – Environmental Programs Update – Willow &/or Hunter**
 - a. Staunton Environmental Programs website – recent & future updates**
 - b. Anything else on the horizon?**

3. Staunton's new "Adopt-a-Spot" Program – Willow

New program can be accessed on City of Staunton website here:

<https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/community-development/environmental-programs-division/adopt-a-spot-program>

Adopt-a-Spot sign-ups are happening - see all current "Adopt-a-Spot" adoptions below:



We could use more strategic adoptions aligned with Lewis Creek & tributaries. *Possible targeted adoptions to seek for Spring 2026 planning:*

- a. **Buttermilk Spring along Stuart Street at Jones Garden** – Jones Garden Volunteers **and** YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps – Stephanie Mason (YMCA Youth Volunteer Coordinator & SPS School Board).
- b. **Maple Street** – encompassing both Buttermilk Spring/Peyton's Creek, on the north side of Maple Street **AND** Lewis Creek, on the south side of Maple Street – Maple Street neighborhood groups?
- c. **Asylum Creek from Weller Woods to the Villages** – Staunton Rotary Club – completed their annual cleanup in June, as part of CBF-CTBD.
- d. **Asylum Creek, through neighborhood upstream from Weller Woods** – Phillips St and/or Ritchie Blvd neighborhood groups?
- e. **Unnamed (Opie?) Creek running behind SHS through their Nature Trail Project** - Staunton High School's "EARL Club", led by Nate Lawrence, once E. coli is resolved?

- f. **Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ Stuart Hall Ballfields** - Stuart Hall “Valley STUwards” Club
 - g. **Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ YMCA Farm** - YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps – Stephanie Mason (YMCA Youth Volunteer Coordinator & SPS School Board)- completed one cleanup in 2025
 - h. **Lewis Creek east of Bells Lane** – Middle River Outfitters
4. **Ongoing monthly E. Coli testing of 12 sites throughout the Lewis Creek Watershed**, conducted by City of Staunton, Department of Public Works – **All**

LCWAC continues to request 9 additional test sites be added:

“Opie Creek” behind Staunton High School
 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

Staunton Public Works responded favorably to adding 9 additional sites to their testing protocol, with lab processing of all 21 water samples, *however, due to staffing shortages, they request that we LCWAC / “Friends of LCWAC” collect ALL of the water samples, IF we increase sample sites from 12 to 21. LCWAC consensus is that recruitment of enough consistent volunteers who could collect samples at 21 sites, all on the same day, would be too complicated to manage and maintain with volunteers.*

LCWAC recommendation to City Council and City Manager – Expand this essential health testing program to add 9 additional sites across our watershed (as listed above), reflecting increased school and community interaction with our local streams.

5. **Remediation of PCBs in the Lewis Creek Watershed** – Fred has now spoken with ALL railway and environmental stakeholders, including Buckingham Branch, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), CSX and their consultant WSP, VA-DEQ, and US-EPA.

EPA RPM/Region III PCB Coordinator – Amanda Michel’s most recent communication on 1/27/26: *“Hi Fred, No updates on my end this month. We also got some crazy sleet in Philly. Hope you guys are warming up!”*

Note that based on previous discussions, EPA is still waiting to receive CSX’s full draft of their **“Risk-Based Disposal Approval Application” (RBDAA)**, which was originally planned to be received by EPA in early 2024. CSX’s RBDAA will include details about the soil remedy, methods to safely excavate the PCB-contaminated soils (now planned by truck), and all safeguards necessary to protect both human health and the environment.

Next steps will 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** – Amanda 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 in Staunton**.

6. VA-DEQ 2026 Brownfields Conference in Staunton - The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) website contains a Brownfields project database, which includes these four (4) entries for our local PCB-contaminated site at the CSX railyard:

VRP Number	Site Name	Primary Status Name	Secondary Status Name	Site Type	Geographic City	Geographic Valley	Site Acreage	Contaminant Type	Onsite Organics	Onsite Inorganics
VRP00462	CSX-Former Staunton Metal Recyclers	Enrolled in Program	Awaiting Participant Action	Industry	Staunton	Valley	2.94	Metals	petroleum products, PCBs	Lead
VRP00462	CSX-Former Staunton Metal Recyclers	Enrolled in Program	Awaiting Participant Action	Industry	Staunton	Valley	2.94	Other Contaminants	petroleum products, PCBs	Lead
VRP00462	CSX-Former Staunton Metal Recyclers	Enrolled in Program	Awaiting Participant Action	Industry	Staunton	Valley	2.94	Petroleum Products	petroleum products, PCBs	Lead
VRP00462	CSX-Former Staunton Metal Recyclers	Enrolled in Program	Awaiting Participant Action	Industry	Staunton	Valley	2.94	Solvents / Degreasers	petroleum products, PCBs	Lead

Fred is now maintaining continued communication with VA-DEQ Brownfields Coordinator – Karen Weber, who most recently responded as follows:

“Fred, thanks for the check in. I have been busy trying to get a grant request submitted for another \$2M in Brownfields funding for statewide use. I finished it yesterday so now I am playing catch up!

We are going to post our ‘call for sessions’ within the week and will open up sponsorship registrations at that time **with regular participant registration to open a few weeks later. We will be having an event planning meeting that includes the City of Staunton in early February too**, so I will have more to share after that, but likely after your February 2 meeting.

Please encourage anyone in your meetings to attend the conference. I also recommend going to our website and subscribing to emails (<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/>) Just go to the bottom of the page for the subscribe button. When you subscribe you can choose which topics and should be able to click Brownfields and Voluntary Remediation. That will ensure you get email updates when we send out this information. **Thanks, Karen”**

Karen also shared her draft 2026 Call for Sessions, which will soon be added to their VA-DEQ website:

2026 Call for Sessions

The Virginia Brownfields Conference is currently seeking session proposals for the 2026 Virginia Brownfields Conference. The event will take place **June 8-10, 2026**, in **Staunton, VA**. We are looking for technical sessions, panels, and discussion-based roundtables. Speakers will be offered a reduced registration rate if their session is chosen. There will also be a poster gallery of project success highlights open throughout the conference for casual viewing.

Poster Gallery

The poster gallery is an opportunity to highlight your own brownfield project successes. Submit your ideas in the form below. *Speaker names are unnecessary as there is no presentation component.* If approved, you will design a 24" x 36" poster to be showcased at the conference. You will also be given the option to have your poster printed for you.

About the Audience

This annual conference is the premier redevelopment event in Virginia. Participants include community members, municipal leaders, environmental consultants, planners, state and federal environmental agencies, economic development professionals, service providers, and other partners and stakeholders in brownfields. Ideal sessions will be dynamic and have a broad appeal to participants. Sessions should NOT be a sales pitch for a company.

Suggested Topics

- Brownfield Basics
- Community engagement/relationship building
- Project funding
- Technical Aspects of Environmental Assessment
- Phase I/Phase II/field sampling protocols
- Innovative technologies/methods
- Risk assessment
- Emerging contaminants/issues
- Reuse and Redevelopment Planning
- Developer's perspective
- Project highlights/case studies
- Reuse of old school buildings
- Project outcomes/economic data measurements
- Relationship of environmental assessment to redevelopment
- Other related topics
- Poster Gallery – project success highlights

The deadline for submitting session ideas is March 13, 2026, at 11:59 PM. Submitters will be notified in April.

Discussion for Lewis Creek Watershed Committee – DEQ is hoping that we - LCWAC and Friends of LCWAC. will all attend this Brownfields Conference in Staunton, 8-10 June 2026. How else might we be involved in the conference?

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, and Nutrient
- Expansion of FOMR's Benthic Monitoring Program within Staunton's Lewis Creek Watershed** – to be managed locally by LCWAC. FOMR's Pete Cooper & Randolph recently selected Lewis Creek on the YMCA New Hope Road site as our first official benthic monitoring site. The YMCA Board subsequently approved our request to begin ongoing benthic monitoring there. – **Randolph, Tina, Mason, and Gini**
 - Environmental & Nutrient Testing** – St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) has loaned **"BOB" test kits** to LCWAC to study, calibrate, and use – Randolph completed initial programming and deployment of "BOB-LCWAC-01" into Asylum Creek at the Villages; with help from FOMR's Howard Kator, Randolph is continuing to better understanding and calibrate readings for dissolved oxygen, impacts by sediment accumulation, and algae growth. – **Randolph**
8. **Future Visions of Daylighted Streams & Watershed Projects** – **Coye, Randolph & Fred**
- Storm water drain covers** – artistic designs to heighten community awareness of water runoff flowing to the Chesapeake Bay – **partnering with Staunton Augusta Art Center and Angus Carter**, and **local artist/muralist Andrew Davis**– first drain cover mural will be on North Lewis Street, adjacent to Chicano Boy, and across from Brite bus terminal – **"From Lewis Creek to the Chesapeake Bay"** – **Coye**
 - Upcoming Exhibition: "The Wharf Parking Lot: Reimagined"** – **06-22 February 2026 @ Staunton Augusta Art Center** – **Prof. Traci Wile and JMU Architectural Design Students; LCWAC Members are invited to all of these events:**
 - Opening Reception** – Saturday, 07 February 2026, 4-6pm
 - Community Workshop #1** – Saturday, 14 February 2026, 1-3pm
 - Community Workshop #2** – Saturday, 21 February 2026, 1-3pm
 - YMCA Expansion on New Hope Road** – **Shenandoah Green (501c3) Staunton Tree Stewards, on behalf of and in partnership with the YMCA, has been awarded a grant from CSPDC for Riparian Buffer plantings along Lewis Creek** – 45 trees to be planted along the south side of Lewis Creek, and 90 wetland plantings along the north side. Volunteers will be needed for several planting dates in March – planning to reach out to volunteer bases of Shenandoah Green, FOMR, YMCA Youth Corps, Shenandoah Valley Club of the Deaf. Any other suggestions? - **All**

9. Education & Youth Projects – Trout Unlimited (TU) Trout in the Classroom (TIC) Project in Staunton area schools– Fred

Spring 2026 Activities – Staunton Public Schools plan to release their trout, as follows:

Bessie Weller Elementary - 5th Grade – Science teacher Ashley Cole maintains their tank. Spring 2026 trout release planned for Asylum Creek behind the school.

Ware Elementary - 5th Grade – Science Teacher Shane Brubaker maintains their tank. Spring 2026 trout release planned for Gum Springs Branch in Gypsy Hill Park.

Shelburne Middle School - 6th Grade – Science teachers Kirsten Evans, Adam Johnson and Jessica Bacola maintain their 3 tanks. Spring 2026 trout releases planned for Shenandoah Boy Scout Camp in Swoope.

McSwain Elementary – 5th Grade - new Principal – hopeful for introduction of TU-TIC Program in 2026. Possible future trout release site could be Lewis Creek at the YMCA site on New Hope Road.

10. Stream Naming Project, for consistency across Lewis Creek Watershed – **Doug**

- a. Peyton’s Creek versus Buttermilk Spring?
- b. Gum Springs Branch versus Peyton’s Creek?
- c. Creek running behind Staunton High School – Opie Creek?

11. Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) – Annual Clean the Bay Day (CBD) - -Saturday, 02 May 2026, 9am-12 Noon – Willow has completed Staunton’s 2026 registration paperwork – thank you Willow! Note that the CBF scheduled their watershed-wide clean-up date ***one month prior to past years***, with the intent to capture more student involvement before the school year ends, as well as to avoid volunteer loss due to summer vacations.

12. Consideration for Adoption of a Riparian Buffer or Stream Protection Overlay (SPO) District – Jeff? Rodney? – Should we / can 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 also available is a **model riparian overlay** prepared by Brandywine Conservancy and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association.

Next LCWAC Meeting – Monday, 02 February 2026, 5pm in Staunton City Hall

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

Spring / Summer 2026 – 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

Spring / Summer 2026 – 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

June 8-10, 2026 (Monday-Tuesday) – **VA DEQ's annual Brownfields Summit** – to be held in Staunton – LCWAC attendance, and possible involvement?

Any additional ideas for speakers at future meetings? - All

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 2023-2028, as updated 9/16/2024; General Permit No. VAR040133, 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 9/30/2025, for Permit Cycle 3, Year 2, -01 July 2024 through 30 June 2025; General Permit No. VAR040133

City of Staunton, Virginia Chesapeake Bay Action Plan, 2023-2028, revised 18 Dec 2024

The three 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 & Nature Trail

Brandywine Conservancy and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association - Model Riparian Overlay