

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

Call to order & roll call

Members present: Fred Blanton, Tom Yeago, MaryJo Kricorian, Coye Heard, Randolph Bertin, Tina Haug, Mason Kilbourn

Members absent: Will Crisp, Nicholas Palacio, Doug Wolfe

Do we have a quorum? Yes

City Council present: Jeff Overholtzer

City Staff present: Willow Hughes, Rodney Rhodes

Members of the public present: Steve Maxwell, Wendy Meyer

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:

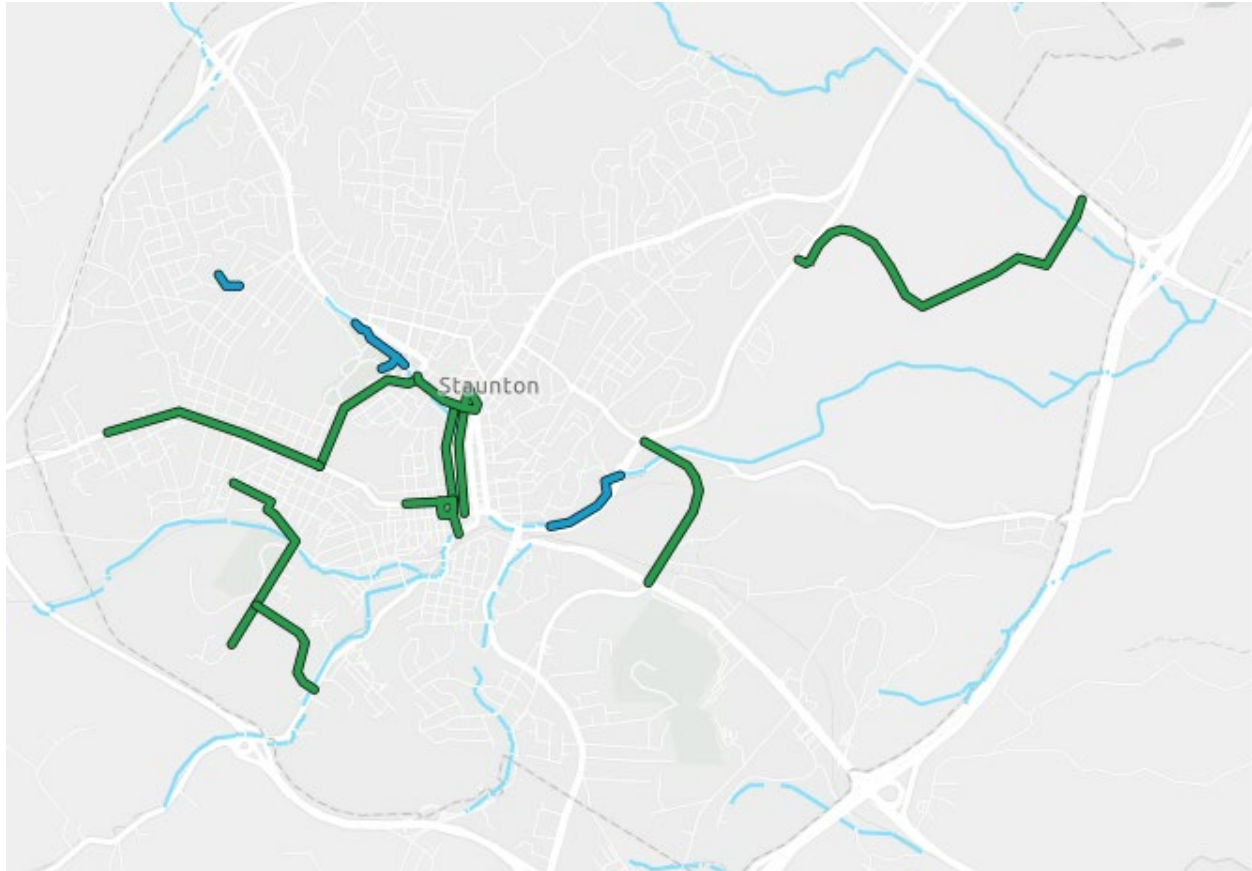
- 1. *Acknowledgement of and remarks by fellow citizens present, and recent public interactions and/or local press reported by LCWAC members – All.***
- 2. City of Staunton – Environmental Programs Update – Willow &/or Hunter**
 - a. Staunton Environmental Programs website** – recent & future updates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

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>

More Adopt-a-Spot sign-ups are happening! - See all current "Adopt-a-Spot" **stream and **street** adoptions below, *including recent adoptions of Cole Ave and GHP stream sections by Staunton's own Environmental Programs personnel (thank you!):***



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

- c. **Buttermilk Spring along Stuart Street at Jones Garden – Jones Garden Volunteers and YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps – led by Stephanie Mason (YMCA Youth Volunteer Coordinator & SPS School Board).**
- d. **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?**
- e. **Asylum Creek from Weller Woods to the Villages – Staunton Rotary Club – completed their annual cleanup in June, as part of CBF-CTBD.**

- f. ***Asylum Creek, through neighborhood upstream from Weller Woods – Phillips St and/or Ritchie Blvd neighborhood groups?***
 - g. ***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?***
 - h. ***Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ Stuart Hall Ballfields - Stuart Hall "Valley STUwards" Club?***
 - i. ***Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ YMCA Farm - YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps, led by Stephanie Mason?***
 - j. ***Lewis Creek east of Bells Lane – Middle River Outfitters, led by Justin Fischbach?***
- 3. *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 E. coli test sites be added:

- 13. "Opie Creek" behind Staunton High School
- 14. Lewis Creek at Bridge Street
- 15. Lewis Creek at Church Street
- 16. Lewis Creek at New Hope Road and Commerce Road
- 17. Lewis Creek at New Hope Road and Statler Blvd
- 18. Buttermilk Spring at the intersection of Montgomery, Stuart, and Peck streets
- 19. Gum Spring Branch in GHP between the Gypsy Hill Express & the Duckpond
- 20. Asylum Creek at Ritchie Blvd
- 21. 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 proposed 21 water samples, *however, due to staffing shortages, they request that we, LCWAC / "Friends of LCWAC" collect ALL 21 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 just 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.

- 4. *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 2/23/26: *"Hi Fred, I am confirmed to present at the conference, but which date I'll be presenting*

has not been decided yet. I will be in attendance for the whole conference though! I've spoken with WSP, but no concrete plans on a submission date. They seemed open to having me attend a site visit sometime this spring, so hopefully we can get things rolling."

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**.

5. VA-DEQ 2026 Brownfields Conference, 8-10 June 2026, in Staunton, at Hotel 24 South -

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	Site Address	Contaminant Type	Contaminants	Contaminants
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 has spoken with VA-DEQ Brownfields Coordinator – Karen Weber, who most recently encouraged us to check out their "Save the Date" website here:

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/land-waste/remediation-programs/brownfields>

Karen encourages anyone at our Lewis Creek meetings to attend this VA DEQ Brownfields Conference, and also recommends going to their website and subscribing to emails

(<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/>) Go to the bottom of the page for the **subscribe** button. When you subscribe you can choose / click specific topics, including Brownfields and Voluntary Remediation. That will ensure you get email updates when DEQ sends out this information.

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.

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**. DEQ are looking for technical sessions, panels, and discussion-based roundtables. Speakers will be offered a reduced registration rate if their session is chosen.

Suggested Session 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.

Poster Gallery - There will also be a poster gallery of project success highlights open throughout the conference for casual viewing. The poster gallery is an opportunity to highlight your own brownfield project successes. Submit your ideas in the form below. If approved, you will design a 24" x 36" poster to be showcased at the conference. You will also be given the option of having your poster printed for you.

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?

- 6. VDOT Project – Commerce Road, Route 11, City of Staunton – *Shared Use Path***
25 February 2026, 4-6pm, Staunton City Hall – ***Design Public Hearing*** - Fred & Coye attended (brochures to be distributed at our LCWAC meeting)
Spring 2026 – Consideration for design approval
Spring 2027 – Begin acquisition of right of way
Late 2028 – Construction

This project creates a 0.82 mile long shared-use path along the southbound side of Commerce Road, from S. Coalter Street to just before Statler Blvd. The total project cost will be approximately \$6.2M, including \$200K for acquisition of the right of way, \$1M for engineering, and \$5M for construction. There is no mention of the adjacent Lewis Creek anywhere in the project overview.

Discussion for Lewis Creek Watershed Committee – Is there an opportunity to influence the project to include anything relative to the adjacent Lewis Creek - e.g. riparian buffer restoration, natural landscaping, signage, etc.? Background – see attached final **Staunton Greenways Plan**, as adopted by Staunton City Council on 20 December 2020; see pages 8-11 for reference to the Commerce Road shared-use path.

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
 - a. **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**
 - b. **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 & Local Watershed Projects** – Coye, Randolph & Fred
 - a. **Recent Exhibition: "The Wharf Parking Lot: Reimagined"** – 06-22 February 2026 @ Staunton Augusta Art Center – Prof. Traci Wile and JMU Architectural Design Students; several LCWAC Members attended – **Fred, Randolph, others?**
 - **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
 - b. **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 (see attached mural #1 & narrative) – **"From Lewis Creek to the Chesapeake"** – **Coye**

- c. **YMCA Expansion at 575 New Hope Road – Shenandoah Green (501c3) Staunton Tree Stewards, 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 100 wetland shrubs & trees to be planted along the north side.**

Kickoff was held on Wednesday, 25 February 2026 – 9 volunteers + 1 intern planted 60 wetland shrubs & trees along the north side of Lewis Creek – 85 shrubs & trees to go!

Volunteers will be needed for several planting dates in March, until we finish:

Sunday, 08 March 2026, 1pm - 5pm – more planting of 40 wetland shrubs & trees along north side of Lewis Creek

Thursday, 12 March 2026, 8am - 10am - qty 45 tree saplings to be delivered to YMCA

Thursday, 12 March 2026, 10am - 2pm – placement of 45 tree saplings along south side of Lewis Creek, then begin planting ...

Friday, 13 March 2026, 5:30pm - 7pm - SAYMCAYVC

Sunday, 15 March 2026, 4pm - 6pm - SAYMCAYVC

Thursday, 19 March 2026, 10am - 2pm

Saturday, 21 March 2026, 3pm - 5pm - SAYMCAYVC

Sunday, 22 March 2026, 4pm - 6pm - SAYMCAYVC

Saturday, 28 March 2026, 10am - 2pm

Saturday, 28 March 2026, 3pm - 5pm - SAYMCAYVC

Sunday, 29 March 2026, 4pm - 6pm - SAYMCAYVC

9. **Education & Youth Projects – Trout Unlimited (TU) Trout in the Classroom (TIC) Project in Staunton area schools**– volunteers needed for science demonstrations & Brook Trout releases – Fred, Randolph, Tina, Mason, Gini + others?

Staunton Public Schools – Spring 2026 Brook Trout Release Activities:

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

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

Shelburne Middle School - 6th Grade – Science teachers Kirsten Evans, Adam Johnson and Jessica Bacola maintain their 3 tanks. ***Brook Trout releases planned for Shenandoah Boy Scout Camp in Swoope on Monday, 20 April, from 10am – 2pm.***

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

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?

10. 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.

11. 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, 06 April 2026, at 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

Staunton Greenways Plan, as adopted by Staunton City Council on 20 December 2020