

Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee
01 June 2026, 5:00pm EST
Minutes

Call to order & roll call

Members present: Fred Blanton (Chair), Coye Heard, Doug Wolfe, Randolph Bertin, Tom Yeago, Tina Huang

Do we have a quorum? Yes

City Council present: Adam Campbell and Jeff Overholtzer

City Staff present: Willow Hughes and Rodney Rhodes

3 Votes This Meeting*:

- **Unanimous approval** – remaining LCWAC budget for FY26 will be donated to the Staunton Augusta Art Center to assist in the installation of the first storm drain mural.
- **Unanimous approval** – to officially submit the request to name the stream on the Staunton High School’s property “Opie Creek” to GNIS.
- **Unanimous approval** – to officially submit Poague Run to GNIS.

*Additional details in sections below.

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

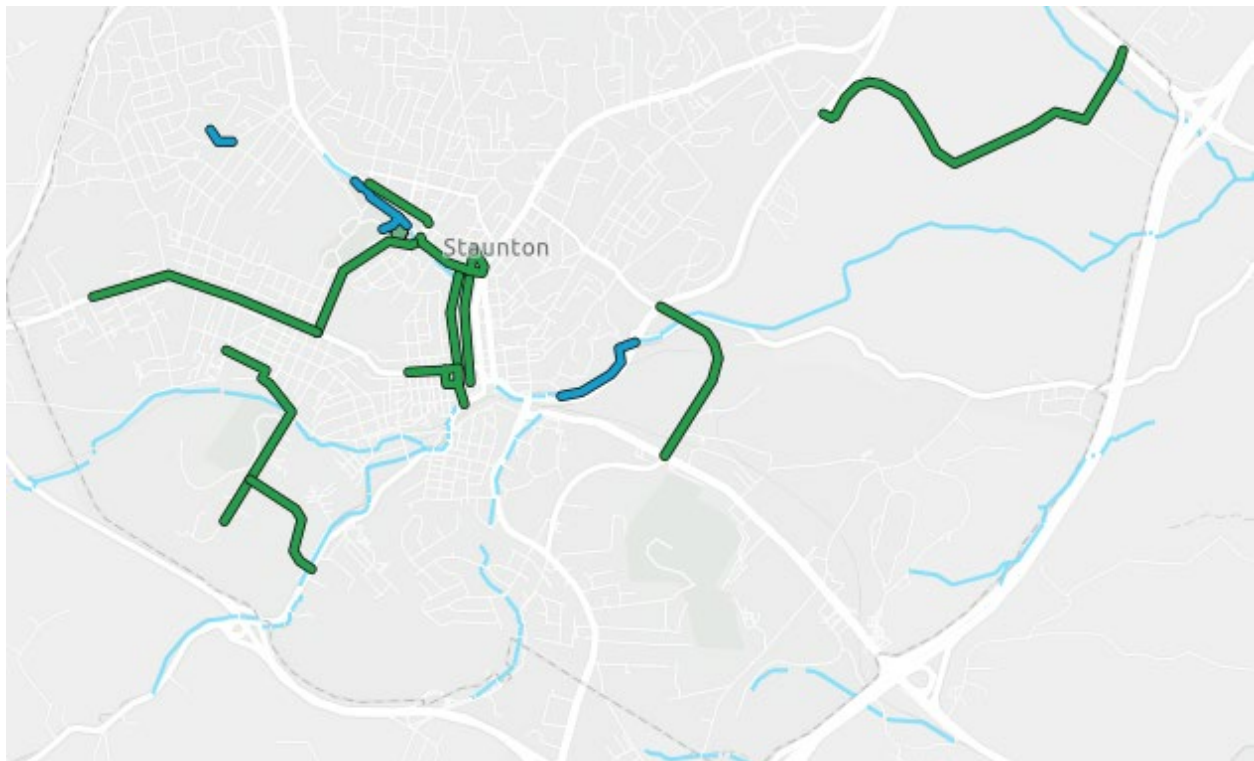
- 1. Conserve and actively promote** the improvement of the waters of Lewis Creek;
- 2. Research and evaluate** water quality and environmental issues involving or impacting Lewis Creek;
- 3. Provide recommendations** to conduct or contract for studies that identify, analyze and prioritize alternatives 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.

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** – updates to Stormwater Management Program Page: <https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/community-development/environmental-programs-division/stormwater-management-program>
 - b. **Flood Resilience Plan - Draft submitted to DCR**
 - c. **One new Adopt-a-Spot group – Augusta St.**
 - d. **Storm drain mural application is now online**
3. **Staunton’s new “Adopt-a-Spot” Program – Willow**

New combined 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>

See most current “Adopt-a-Spot” **stream** and **street** adoptions below:



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

- a. **Lewis Creek between Middlebrook Rd and Seth Dr.** – *Shenandoah Valley Club for the Deaf, as a critical perpendicular downhill extension to their 2nd adoption of Lacy B. King Way*
 - b. **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).*
 - c. **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?*
 - d. **Asylum Creek, through the neighborhood upstream from Weller Woods** – *Phillips St and/or Ritchie Blvd neighborhood group – possible new lead of Eileen Burns who recently contacted FOMR about trash currently accumulating in Asylum Creek*
 - e. **Asylum Creek from Weller Woods to the Villages** – *Staunton Rotary Club – they are already completing annual cleanups every Spring, as part of CBF-CTBD.*
 - f. **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?*
 - g. **Lewis Creek along New Hope Road @ Stuart Hall Ballfields** - *Stuart Hall “Valley STUwards” Club or their new Rotary Interact Club?*
 - h. **Lewis Creek along New Hope Road at YMCA Extension** - *YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps, led by Stephanie Mason*
 - i. **Lewis Creek east of Bells Lane** – *Middle River Outfitters, led by Justin Fischbach?*
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 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.

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

- a. **Amanda completed a local site visit and walk-through with CSX and WSP** in the morning of Tuesday, 21 April 2026
- b. **Amanda joined LCWAC members for lunch, including Councilman Jeff Overholtzer**, after the walk-through with CSX and WSP, at Noon on Tuesday, 21 April 2026
- c. **Amanda recently reported the latest status:** *“Hi Fred, Apologies for not getting back to you last month! We do have an update - CSX will be performing some additional soil sampling next week to better delineate excavation zones that will require disposal in a Hazardous Waste Landfill. They have indicated that they will submit the RBDAA within 60 days of receiving the data from that sampling. Following our site visit they seem to be ready to get the ball rolling. Thank you, Amanda.”*

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:

- d. **EPA will initiate a 30-day public comment period** through a notice published in our local News Leader.
 - e. **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**.
 - f. 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, 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 Valley	Site Address	Contaminant Type	Contaminants	Contaminant 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

VA-DEQ Brownfields Coordinator – Karen Weber encourages anyone at our Lewis Creek meetings to attend this VA DEQ Brownfields Conference in Staunton, from Monday-Wednesday, 08 June, 12 Noon – Wednesday, 10 June, 1pm, 2026.

Registration for the conference is now open and online. See the website here to register:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-virginia-brownfields-conference-registration-1980493437184>

Registration rates are as follows:

General Admission (early bird through 01 May 2026) - \$225.00
 Government, Non-profit (early bird through 01 May 2026) - \$175.00 – **Fred has registered**
 Staunton Brownfields Walking Tour on Monday (through 08 June 2026) - \$15.00
 One-day admission for Tuesday (through 01 June 2026) - \$150.00
 One day admission for Wednesday (through 01 June 2026) - \$100.00
 Student admission (through 01 June 2026) - \$25.00

About the Speakers and the Audience - This annual conference is the premier redevelopment event in Virginia. Participants will 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 will NOT be a sales pitch for a company. *Note also that our EPA PCB Coordinator Amanda Michel is confirmed to be speaking about our PCB-contaminated CSX Site at this Conference.*

- 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 were distributed at our previous LCWAC meeting)
Spring 2026 – Consideration for design approval – **any updates???**
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.

Continued discussion for Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee

- a. Is there an opportunity to influence the project to include anything related to the adjacent Lewis Creek - e.g. riparian buffer restoration, natural landscaping, signage, etc.?
- b. Background – 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.
- c. VSDB has expressed interest in acquiring the old 1.5-acre mill site at 300 Commerce Road, which is currently owned by Hugh B Sproul III, since at least 1967, is currently assessed by Staunton for only \$1,000., and is zoned R2. Preliminary and unofficial intel from VSDB is that members of their Foundation Board would like to turn the site into a small park, which could be part of Staunton's new Greenway.
- d. Additional LCWAC idea - extend the Greenway across Statler Blvd, and along the north side of New Hope Road, and specifically along the north side riparian buffer of Lewis Creek along the edge of Stuart Hall's ballfields, across the small lower flood plain of Will Moore's property, across the planned north trail section of the YMCA property, and then up to Staunton's old waste water treatment plant site, for hilltop park and pavilion (like Waynesboro's Sunset Park?).

8. 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*** – now managed locally by LCWAC.
 - i. FOMR's Pete Cooper & LCWAC's Randolph Bertin selected **Lewis Creek on the YMCA New Hope Road site as LCWAC Benthic Monitoring Site #1 / FOMR Site #10** (and was approved by the YMCA Board).
 - ii. **LCWAC Benthic Team** completed first Benthic Monitoring – **Randolph, Coye, Gini, Tina, and Mason**
05 May 2026 – viability assessment completed by Randolph & Coye
12 May 2026 – first official assessment completed by Randolph, Coye & 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 understand and calibrate readings for dissolved oxygen, impacts by sediment accumulation, and algae growth. ***Possible re-deployment into Lewis Creek at YMCA site?***

9. Future Visions of Daylighted Streams & Local Watershed Projects – Coye, Randolph & Fred

- a. **Stormwater Drain Cover Project** - Coye

- i. Artistic designs to heighten community awareness of water runoff flowing to the Chesapeake Bay – **partnering with Staunton Augusta Art Center (SAAC) and Angus Carter**
- ii. City of Staunton has worked out their permitting process, and Angus Carter has filed the paperwork for the first drain cover - ***“From Lewis Creek to the Chesapeake”*** – designed by local artist/muralist Andrew Davis– to be installed on North Lewis Street, adjacent to Chicano Boy, and across from Brite bus terminal
- iii. We are now in fundraising mode – donations can be made to the Staunton Augusta Arts Center (SAAC), designated for the Stormwater Drain Cover Project.
- **VOTE: Unanimous approval** – remaining LCWAC budget for FY26 will be donated to the Staunton Augusta Art Center to assist in the installation of the first storm drain mural.
 - **Remaining budget is \$500**

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?
- **VOTE: Unanimous approval** – to officially submit the request to name the stream on the Staunton High School’s property “Opie Creek” to GNIS.
- **VOTE: Unanimous approval** – to officially submit Poague Run to GNIS. Not a naming or renaming, but this stream does not show up in that database.

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 within Staunton city limits, which have either frontage or include streams within the property, that would require riparian buffer protection of the streams? See latest draft of **Staunton Comprehensive Plan 2045**, Page 33: ***“Environment – Create overlay zoning or strengthen development standards to further protect sensitive ecological areas and floodplains.”***

Next LCWAC Meeting – Monday, 03 August 2026, at 5pm in Staunton City Hall

(Remember that we always skip July meetings, due to LCWAC member vacations, and difficulty achieving a quorum).

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

June 8-10, 2026 (Monday-Wednesday) – **VA DEQ’s annual Brownfields Summit** – to be held in Staunton – LCWAC attendance is encouraged

Summer/Fall 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

Summer/Fall 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

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 Greenways Plan, as adopted by Staunton City Council on 20 December 2020
Staunton City Schools - Proposal for Staunton High School Outdoor Learning Space & Nature Trail, 2023

Staunton Flood Resiliency Plan – draft, April 2026

Staunton Comprehensive Plan 2045 – draft, May 2026