

Virginia Resource Advisory Committee
SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT

Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2023

12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

George Washington & Jefferson National Forests Supervisor's Office
Roanoke, Virginia

Forest Service Attendees

Gwendolyn Mason, DFO

Jennifer Hummel, RAC Coordinator

Linwood Butler, Deputy Forest Supervisor

Kevin Kyle, James River and Warm Springs District Ranger

RAC Attendees

Stephanie Danahy, Chairperson

Al Bourgeois

Charles "Wayne" Thacker

Dr. Michael "Mike" Rush (Call-in)

Dr. Tauna Gulley (Call-in)

Dr. Thomas "Tom" Winfred Richardson

Eugene "Ed" E. Stoots

Kyle David Lawrence (Call-in)

Lisa Kestner Quigley

Richard A. Brooks

Public Attendees

No attendees from the public. Two written comments were submitted in advance and attached to the meeting minutes.

Meeting began at 12:45 pm. Gwen Mason, DFO, called the meeting to order, thanked attendees for their time and attendance before recognizing Deputy Forest Supervisor Linwood Butler for opening remarks.

Linwood Butler welcomed Virginia Resource Advisory Committee members, outlined his background, and expressed excitement for his new position as Deputy Forest Supervisor. Linwood highlighted the importance of the RAC to the forest and thanked RAC members.

The meeting was turned over to Stephanie Danahy, Chairperson, who welcomed members and took attendance. A quorum was reached to establish the meeting.

DFO Gwen Mason reviewed general SRS processes regarding membership, project proposal and funding and general guidelines. RAC Members were provided with a printed factsheet regarding their role and expectations as members, attached. Gwen introduced the topic of vacancies on the RAC and the timeline of recruitment. RAC members were reminded that their term ends in March 2025. Members were informed members that the forest will begin the recruitment process for current and upcoming vacancies. Chairperson Stephanie Danahy proposed that all RAC members begin reaching out to their networks for future members. It was decided by the chairperson that recruitment be discussed further at a future administrative meeting planned for August 29, 2023.

Chairperson Stephanie Danahy led the discussion of project proposals as follows:

1) Alleghany/Bath 50-mile Trail Project #2. (This project has been funded previously.) Multiple members raised concerns about needing more information on the current status of Alleghany/Bath 50-mile Trail Project #1. Members expressed that they needed a status update of trail mileage completed and money spent. RAC member Al Bourgeois expressed concerns over a lack of detail to address sediment and erosion issues on the trail. RAC Member Kyle Lawrence noted that he felt the proposal requested a very low amount of money for high mileage which may be ineffective. He suggested the project would be more effective if it focused on higher quality work in fewer miles.

A RAC member asked if there were any support letters from district rangers or other approvals regarding the proposed projects. Gwen Mason informed the RAC members that part of the vetting process for proposals was that the RAC DFO and RAC Coordinator discuss the projects with District rangers so that they can voice their concerns. Kevin Kyle, James River Warm Springs District Ranger, expressed to the RAC that he supports both projects proposed for his district.

RAC member Richard Brooks proposed the possibility of approving a project for RAC Recommendation with stipulations. Chairperson Stephanie Danahy and other RAC members confirmed that they would be willing to approve a project with stipulations. RAC DFO Gwen Mason confirmed the forest would accept the RAC recommendations.

2) Smith Creek-Wilson Creek Watershed Connector Trails Project and opened the floor for feedback from RAC members on the project. No concerns on the project were raised. RAC members noted the proposal had extensive detail that reflected the experience of the partner proposing the project.

3) Wolf Creek Indian Village Connector Trail Project and opened the floor for feedback from RAC members on the projects. DFO Mason informed the RAC Members that the district ranger had concerns regarding the project because of a lack of connection to forest lands. Multiple concerns were raised regarding the proposal, including issues with a lack of detail and low estimates in the financial plan, a lack of utilizing volunteers for project work, and the location of the project being of more benefit to private land than National Forest Land.

Chairperson Danahy called the roll for voting. DFO Mason recorded votes for each project:

- 1) The Alleghany/Bath 50-mile Trail Project #2 was unanimously approved for full funding with the stipulation that the project manager turn in a recent project update for Alleghany/Bath 50-mile Trail Project #1 with information on project mileage completion, project work photos, details on what miles of trail Alleghany/Bath 50-mile Trail Project #2 would address, and an update on spending from FY21 within 30 days of notification of approval.
- 2) The Smith Creek-Wilson Creek Watershed Connector Trails Project was unanimously approved for full funding.
- 3) The Wolf Creek Indian Village Connector Trail Project was unanimously rejected for funding.

RAC Coordinator Jennifer Hummel led the public comment section. There were no members of the public in attendance. Jennifer read the written comments submitted by the public and provided them in writing to the members of the RAC:

Submitted June 24, 2023 by Jean Public via email

*1 no logging
2. no grazing
3. no new roads
4. no chemical use
5. no hunting or trapping
6. no farming
7. preservation and protection as main focus
8. fully protect all wildlife and birds
i cannot attend but these are my request that our forests be protected. we desperately need to protect something. developers are going wild taking every inch for moneymaking. this land is national land and we need desperately to protect it. jean public jeanpublic1@yahoo.com*

Submitted July 2, 2023 by Jean Public via email

i see the public has 3 minutes to speak to this agency. i thought we had govt of the people by the people for the people. how did you determine that that right only equals 3 minutes for the public to speak. isn't that somewhat demeaning from that general right that the public has in this country. are you demeaning the public

secondly, if this is national land that belongs to all 356 million americans, i hope you have enough time set aside so that the americans can speak on their national land. i believe our national land should be preserved and protected for all

*1. no hunting or trapping.
2 no prescribed burning
3. no chemical applications to cause death from chemicals
4. no new roads
5. no grazing.*

this comment is for the public record. please receipt. jean public jeanpublic1@gmail.com

Chairperson Stephanie Danahy led a final administrative discussion and close out. She proposed an administrative meeting by phone on August 29, 2023 to discuss recruitment for RAC members and check in on FY21 project updates. She thanked all RAC Members for their time and attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

Certified by:

Stephanie B Danahy

Chairperson Stephanie Danahy

Designated Federal Official Gwen Mason