

March 1, 2005

The Honorable Dennis Rooker, Chair
Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

The Honorable David Brown, Mayor
City of Charlottesville City Council

RE: Community Water Supply

Dear Chairman Rooker and Mayor Brown,

We appreciate the importance of the March 3 City-County discussion and the complexity of the decisions facing the City Council and County Board of Supervisors. We the undersigned, after extensive discussion and careful review of the available information, respectfully submit the following recommendations. We hope you will consider them.

1. **In providing for our future water supply, take a decisive leadership role to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens.** This is the only way to address the broad fiscal and policy ramifications of each of the proposed alternatives. RWSA is charged primarily with providing adequate potable water for the community. We cannot expect RWSA to perform comprehensive water resource planning that incorporates all environmental, social, and economic objectives.
2. **Clarify the decision-making process.** The public has a right to know how decisions will be made and who will make these decisions. The public must then be given the opportunity to address decision-makers in a public hearing before the final decision is made.
3. **Don't let an artificial deadline or artificial crisis drive decision-making.** The RWSA's July deadline is driven by the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) request for renovation of the Ragged Mountain Dam spillway. It is not in the public's best interest to rush through comprehensive community water supply planning based on this single issue. An extension must be requested. With the community proceeding diligently and in good faith, there is every reason to believe that a request would be granted. Take the necessary time to make a well-informed decision.

In addition, there is no immediate "water crisis." Safe yield projections are based on available water during the worst drought-of-record. During periods of normal rainfall, almost 97% of the water in the South Fork Rivanna River flows over the dam. With the addition of the water from Beaver Creek, the safe yield of the existing system can be significantly increased so that this community would feel no shortfall of water supply even during the most severe drought through the year 2018.

4. **Examine the phrase “least environmentally damaging.”** “Least environmentally damaging” should not be defined solely by the impacts of the alternative being reviewed. Take a comprehensive view of environmental impacts and include local interests in the equation. Although negotiations with state and local regulators are extremely important, planning should not be driven by attempts to shorten these negotiations. There are unintended economic and environmental costs associated with the different alternatives. Three are listed below:
 - a. *If the James River pipeline is built, the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir (SFRR) will be left to atrophy.* RWSA has stated that it will do some dredging to maintain water quality but not enough to maintain the reservoir’s function as a storage facility. But what has not been considered is the consequence of allowing further sedimentation to occur unchecked at the mouth of the reservoir. This sand and clay bar will act as a dam slowing down the flow of water and lead to further deposition of sediment upstream from Reas Ford. Therefore, the “least environmentally damaging” alternative may create unintended environmental damage if it allows the formation of a new dam. Any alternative that would preclude dredging of the SFRR must be assessed with consideration of the environmental damage that would be done to the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir and River. We must also renew our commitment to address sedimentation as part of our overall watershed management.
 - b. *If the Ragged Mountain Reservoir is enlarged, with the Moormans River acting as a significant water source, the Moormans could be further atrophied.* Any alternative that relies heavily on the Moormans River can only be considered after the completion of the Nature Conservancy’s ongoing study. Their scientific evaluation is needed to assess the magnitude of further damage.
 - c. *If the Ragged Mountain Reservoir is used as pump storage facility for James River water, raw James River water - with its known pollutants - will be brought into the Ragged Mountain watershed.* This will have environmentally damaging consequences and must be considered in the mitigation costs for the James River alternative.

5. **Avoid making decisions based on cost figures made available to date.** The complexity of our water supply system has led to a long list of alternatives and combinations of alternatives. Cost estimates for several of the alternatives have been incomplete and often misleading. There remains uncertainty as to the required improvements to water treatment systems for each proposed alternative. The City and County should require from the RWSA the following:
 - Recommendations and cost estimates for entire systems, not just for selected components.
 - Additional information on more long-term costs (e.g., atrophy of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir) that have not been presented.
 - An analysis of the financial impacts of the timing - or phasing - of the various alternatives.

6. **Recognize the challenges of a 50-year planning horizon.** We cannot predict with certainty what our water demand will be in the year 2055, and it is prudent to build and

maintain only what we need. Therefore, it makes sense to have a plan that allows for flexibility in the ongoing integrated water supply planning and management. An incremental, local approach to our water supply will maintain acceptable safe yield for the nearer term and allow time in which to implement additional measures, as more reliable forecasts for water demand are completed. Consistent with the accepted principles of sustainability, we should plan the best we can for the benefit of future generations without foreclosing other options that might later be more appropriate.

This community values its rural landscape and natural environment. This stewardship is embedded in both City and County comprehensive plans. While the RWSA must advise elected officials on a course they believe will be most acceptable to the regulatory agencies, elected officials must choose the course that will be most acceptable to this community. Otherwise comprehensive planning would be a meaningless process. We cannot ignore the ecology, health and stewardship of our local reservoirs and streams.

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Sincerely,
[signed]
John Martin
Friends of the Moormans River
Albemarle County

[signed]
Scott Neese
Albemarle County

[signed]
Jack Marshall
Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population
Albemarle County

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Harry Levins
Albemarle County

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Nancy Button, President
League of Women Voters
Albemarle County

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City of Charlottesville

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Albemarle County

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City of Charlottesville

CC:

Mr. Ken Boyd, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mr. David Bowerman, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Ms. Sally Thomas, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mr. David Wyant, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Lindsey Dorrier, Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Kevin Lynch, City of Charlottesville City Council
Mr. Blake Caravati, City of Charlottesville City Council
Mr. Robert Schilling, City of Charlottesville City Council
Ms. Kendra Hamilton, City of Charlottesville City Council
Mr. William Brent, Albemarle County Service Authority
Ms. Judith Mueller, Public Works, City of Charlottesville
Mr. Mike Gafney, Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority
Mr. Robert Tucker, County Executive, County of Albemarle
Mr. Gary O'Connell, City Manager, City of Charlottesville
Mr. Tom Frederick, Director, Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority
Ms. Tamara Green, Natural Resources Manager, Albemarle County
Mr. Greg Harper, Water Resources Manager, Albemarle County
Mr. Peter Stokely, EPA/EPIC
Ms Kim Marbain, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Mr. John Kaufman, Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries
Mr. Andy Zadnik, Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries
Ms. Lynn Crump, Div. Of Planning & Recreation, Virginia Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
Mr. Lee Hill, Div. Of Planning & Recreation, Virginia Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
Mr. Jim Brogdon, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mr. William Arguto, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mr. Joesph Hassel, Virginia Dept. of Environmental Quality
Mr. Monte McGregor, Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries
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Mr. Jeff Madden, Virginia Marine Resource Commission
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Ms. Ethel Eaton, Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources
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Mr. James Moore, Virginia Dept. of Health
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