

First District Environmental Advisory Council
Thursday, February 19, 2009
Tappahannock District Office
9:00 am

The meeting began at 9:10 am with introductory remarks from Rep. Wittman. Introductions of all Advisory Council attendees followed (see attached list of meeting participants) with Rep. Wittman summarizing the legislation which has been introduced concerning environmental issues in the 111th Congress.

Rep. Wittman discussed **The Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act (HR 1053)** legislation—which calls for better accounting and will put in place cross-cutting budgeting and tighter management controls to insure that each dollar spent in support of the Bay is tracked and is producing results. Rep. Wittman stated that he would like more accountability and would examine programs to determine which is the most effective. He estimated that more than \$6 billion has been spent in the past 20 years on Bay cleanup and stated that the Chesapeake Bay partnership involves 10 federal agencies, six states and thousands of localities. He stressed that all parties involved had to do their part to enhance the viability of the Bay but would need to do this in a coordinated way, and it would take cooperation between Federal, State and local governments to make this work.

There was open dialogue on the best ways to communicate with people as to how they live in the Bay watershed. Examples of how to handle kitchen waste, fertilizer and other products to lessen negative environmental impact on the Bay was discussed. Rep. Wittman stressed that this is a bi-partisan issue—he added that he has been in discussions with Chairman Rahall and others to expedite passage of this legislation.

Rep. Wittman introduced discussion of the **Solid Waste Interstate Transportation Act (HR 274)**. The legislation is designed to provide localities more control over limiting waste by granting them import control over smaller landfill facilities. Rep. Wittman stressed that these landfills are only temporary repositories. Cleanup costs of contaminated groundwork was discussed. Rep. Wittman indicated that Virginia is the 2nd largest importer of trash in the US and that this bill includes provisions that states

will have greater influence over imports to landfills that take in more than 100,000 tons of waste per year.

Rep. Wittman then opened up discussions on the **Working Waterfront Preservation Act**, which was originally introduced by Rep. JoAnn Davis in the 100th Congress. This would award a grant to a state or local government of a coastal state, nonprofit or a fishing business for projects to acquire property in a coastal area to provide access to commercial fisherman in working waterfront areas. Rep. Wittman stated that we need to develop a more diverse, sustainable economy to level the playing field to maintain businesses connected to the waterfront.

Discussion continued with meeting participants offering possible solutions on a variety of environmental problems including ways to produce energy from trash; assistance on alternatives to landfills, trash used for energy feedstocks, getting rid of industrial packaging, increased population growth in the Bay watershed and environmental education legislation.

Several additional suggestions were offered from the meeting attendees on a number of issues including: introducing formal recognition of rivers in Virginia as National Scenic Rivers. During discussions concerning overfertilization of land by private homeowners, a suggestion was made to provide an incentive by placing a fee on fertilizers to reduce usage; and a proposal was made to institute a Governors Award for the best natural yard managed without chemicals. Finally, a suggestion was made for a “Bay Czar” or leader for the Chesapeake Bay Act who could oversee the restoration issues impacting the Chesapeake Bay. Rep. Wittman offered to have staff review these suggestions.

There was in-depth discussion of the introduction of the Asian oyster into native oyster beds in the Bay with several participants voicing their concerns. Rep. Wittman stated that there will have to be a balance to be filled in this respect; to look at ways that all have equal access and to not have one group of seafood producers have an unfair advantage over another.

The next agenda item discussed was **S. 22: the Senate Omnibus Public Lands Bill**, which may be considered when the Congress returns to work next week. Rep. Wittman indicated that he will vote in favor of this legislation. Portions of the bill that concern Virginia include the Northern Neck Heritage Study Area, Civil War Battlefield Preservation Act, Virginia

Ridge and Valley Wilderness Act and the Washington-Rochambeau Historic Trail.

Rep. Wittman introduced discussions on energy and climate change issues. He stated that at this time there are a number of bills that haven't been formally filed but those on the Hill will be introducing several pieces of legislation as soon as Congress reconvenes.

A meeting attendee suggested that Rep. Wittman may want to participate in a Town Hall meeting on green jobs in the First District. Rep. Wittman agreed that this would be useful and that we need to find the right mix of using several sources of energy while examining sustainability vs. environmental impacts to put together a reasonable piece of legislation.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 a.m.