

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY PLAN

A Message from the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and the Albemarle County Service Authority - *October, 2010*

Following extensive public engagement, all elected officials from both Albemarle County and Charlottesville adopted a Community Water Supply Plan in 2006.

Key elements of this long-term Plan:

1. Replace the existing unsafe Ragged Mountain dam with a new one that raises the dam height by 42 feet .
2. Replace the 83-year-old Sugar Hollow pipeline with a newer, shorter pipeline connecting the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir with the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and the two corresponding treatment plants.
3. Upgrade and expand water treatment plants.
4. Provide enough storage to get us through the most severe drought of record.

The Board of Supervisors and the Albemarle County Service Authority (members listed below) want to speak directly to county citizens about the factual and objective reasons why our support for the Plan remains firm, despite some recent discussion about potential changes to the Plan. County officials have not forgotten the 2002 drought and have promised the community that we will take action to ensure our community's water supply. Our unwavering support for timely implementation of this Plan represents that commitment. Our key reasons for endorsing the approved Plan include the following:

This Plan is the most cost-effective way to meet the community's long term water needs.

- The cost per gallon from increasing the height of Ragged Mountain Dam is less than 1/6 the cost of supplying a gallon of water from dredging, according to a recent dredging study. Dredging alone will not come close to satisfying the fifty year water needs of the community.
- A recently proposed plan to build the new dam in stages is more expensive and impractical, because 99% of the cost is in building the base of the dam. Raising the height at a later date would add another 15% to the total cost.
- More than 70% of the \$140 million cost of the plan goes to repair or replace aging infrastructure, is agreed upon by all boards, and is needed regardless of which plan for acquiring additional water capacity is implemented.
- We are currently experiencing unprecedented favorable construction costs and very low interest rates. If we delay the implementation of the expansion of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir for further debate or studies, we may miss this favorable construction market resulting in higher future costs for citizens. The approved Plan has already been subject to several years of scrutiny and has been fully permitted by State and Federal officials.
- The Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority has performed a five-year financial analysis that shows a new earthen dam at Ragged Mountain can be financed with **no increase** in current wholesale water rates.

This Plan is the most environmentally-friendly option available.

- Federal and State agencies approved the Plan as the least environmentally damaging practicable plan among all of the plans considered for increasing our water supply.
- The expansion of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir is being designed to minimize disturbance of the surrounding natural area above the new shore line, preserving this area for passive recreation and wildlife, while providing a new lake with expanded recreational opportunities and new habitat for diverse aquatic fish and other species.
- The approved Plan keeps our water local. Our largest local watershed, the South Fork Rivanna, will supply our needs while providing increased storage at Ragged Mountain. Environmental studies have confirmed the storage at Ragged Mountain can be obtained with the fewest impacts on the environment.

- The approved Plan restores water levels in the Moormans River back to their natural flow patterns, benefitting recreation, farming, fishing and the abundant wildlife that depend on the Moormans.
- The Plan also helps restore the South Fork Rivanna River by improving stream flow.
- Any water supply expansion plan which is approved will require environmental mitigation. The current Plan includes a mitigation plan which more than mitigates the environmental impacts as measured by the State and Federal agencies and has been approved by The Nature Conservancy.
- The Plan does not in any way limit our capability to conserve water or the means to educate our citizens to conserve water. Some recent discussion about the Plan implies that we are only capable of conserving water if we restrict the availability of our future water supply. Conservation of water comes through education, individual habits, and incentives within retail water sales and policies, not by restricting the size of a reservoir.

Why not just dredge??

- Complete dredging of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir would only provide about **half** the needed water to sustain us through a future drought and would cost six times more per gallon. We would still need to either expand Ragged Mountain or build a new pipeline to the James River to make up the difference.
- The Plan does not prohibit dredging of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir but instead allows us to do it when fuel prices are lowest and when it is most cost effective to process and sell or store the sediment. Alternatives to the Plan that would rely on dredging as the primary or only source of future drinking water would force dredging on terms dictated by water demand leaving us at the mercy of market conditions.
- Dredging is not a onetime cost. If the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir were completely dredged in the next five years, it could lose much of that new capacity over the next fifty years as it continues to silt in.

The Plan continues to have widespread support in the community from diverse groups including the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Charlottesville Albemarle Chamber of Commerce, the Southern Environment Law Center, the League of Women Voters, the Free Enterprise Forum, and The Nature Conservancy to name a few.

Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

- Ann Mallek, Chairman
- Duane Snow, Vice Chairman
- Ken Boyd
- Lindsay Dorrier
- Dennis Rooker
- Rodney Thomas
- Bob Tucker, County Executive

Albemarle County Service Authority Board of Directors

- Clarence Roberts, Chairman
- Richard E. Carter
- Lizbeth Palmer
- James Colbaugh
- David Thomas
- Gary O’Connell, Executive Director

We hope this factual and objective information is helpful to county residents as public discussion concerning the Plan continues.