

Engaging Local Governments

Circuit Rider Pilot Project

On-The-Ground Implementation

2009-2010 Final Report

Jake Romig, York County Circuit Rider
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
May 2010



“...I wanted to take a few minutes to thank you for making available the program for Jake Romig, our Circuit Rider, dealing with water quality issues in York County. He has been instrumental in working through the regulatory issues regarding our flood impoundment project for the borough. Jake has also taken the lead on grant applications for the borough providing quick turn around times on applications. His professionalism has significantly helped Yoe Borough stand out from other applicants.

The Yoe Borough Council appreciates the work that Jake does on our behalf. Thank you again for your support of this vital program...

Sincerely;


**Sam Snyder
President, Yoe Borough Council**

Sincerely;

**John G. Sanford
Mayor, Yoe Borough”**



This project was funded by a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay



The Circuit Rider (CR) Concept

The purpose of the Circuit Rider is to facilitate implementation through the engagement of local governments and stakeholders. The studies are done, the plans are prepared, and the results are in. The Chesapeake Bay continues to be an impaired resource despite decades of devotion to restoring our most treasured resource. The Local Government Advisory Council ~~of the Chesapeake Bay Commission~~ ^{to the Chesapeake Executive Council} feel one of the major barriers to the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort is the gap that exists between local governments and the goals, objectives, and strategies for cleaning up the Bay. This is not to imply that local governments don't have an interest or play a role in the restoration effort, but that they are unsure of what their role is, what needs to be done, how to get started, and what help is available to them. While resources do exist at the local extension, conservation district, planning commission, state level, and federal level offices, there is no resource available to them that provides services from start to finish. Often, other government supported resources don't have capacity and sometimes the capability to offer the services that local governments require to implement Bay strategy goals and objectives. As a result, implementation is delayed at best, non-existent at worst. This lack of resource and delayed implementation at the local level is a major obstacle in achieving a health Chesapeake Bay.

To accelerate the implementation of Bay restoration strategies, break down the barriers to local government involvement, and to highlight the integration of proven and innovative Best Management Practices that can be implemented throughout the Bay watershed, the Local Government Advisory Committee conceptualized the Chesapeake Bay Circuit Rider . A Circuit Rider, as used in this context, is modeled after the Codorus Creek Circuit Rider (Codorus Creek Watershed Project Coordinator) in York County, Pennsylvania and is described herein.

The Codorus Creek "Circuit Rider" (CR) is funded through the Codorus Watershed Endowment of the York County Community Foundation. The circuit rider is responsible for the facilitation of the implementation of the many assessments, studies, and plans that exist for the Codorus Creek Watershed. To facilitate the implementation, the circuit rider offers technical assistance, grant writing, request for proposal preparation, grant administration, funding identification, project coordination, project management, and local priority setting. These services are provided at no charge to local stakeholder groups, individuals, and municipalities.



“The CR will facilitate the achievement of local goals and objectives related to water resources. The CR must have the capability, but not necessarily the capacity, to implement every project from start to finish. They must have a clear understanding of existing plans and studies and must also fully understand the issues, both regionally and locally, facing the Bay, and local watersheds, and how the two are intimately related. They must be technically proficient such that given capacity, they would be able to achieve successful implementation on their own.”

Circuit Rider Pilot Objectives

There are two main broad scale objectives of the York County Circuit Rider Pilot Project: 1) **Engaging local governments** and 2) **On-the-ground implementation**. The project achieved success in both categories by taking a collaborative approach and forming strong partnerships between existing agencies. In some instances different county agencies were not used to working together on specific goals and objectives. The Circuit Rider was able to break down some of those barriers to build capacity through a team approach. Below and on the following pages are some project highlights of success in these two key areas.

Poor House Run – City of York

Poor House Run is a degraded urban stream located in the southcentral area of York City adjacent to Penn State York, York City Ice Rink, and York Catholic High School. Local stakeholders have long wanted to restore approximately 5,000 linear feet of stream and have sought funding to achieve this goal. Unfortunately, funding requests have been denied. Early in 2009 the City of York approached the CR seeking assistance on stabilizing a few short sections of Poor House Run. These areas were threatening existing infrastructure including an access driveway to the City’s yard waste recycling area, a pedestrian bridge, and a sewer line and sewer manhole.

The CR designed the project and submitted proper permits to state and federal authorities.



In addition, the CR is conducting construction management and oversight. Construction is being done by City's work crews and most of the materials are surplus materials the City already owned. The City did not have the financial resources to hire a contractor and secure materials. The project was designed to accommodate on-site materials and use of City work crews. Construction began in December 2009 and will continue into early 2010.



*Poor House Run before and during construction
December 2009.*

Landowner Assistance

Approximately 40 landowners, ranging from farmers to small lot sub-divisions, have requested technical assistance related to stream stewardship. Site visits were made with approximately 25 landowners to determine the context of the stream impairments, probable cause, and what the landowner might be able to do on their own to alleviate some of the concerns. Work plans are in development for these properties. New landowners are being identified on a continuous basis. Site visits will continue in 2010.

Mill Creek – Yoe Borough

This project began in 2008 and continued throughout 2009 and continues into 2010. Yoe Borough owns two in-line flood storage facilities that due to upstream flooding and erosion, have filled with sediment.



The Circuit Rider assisted Yoe Borough with the following:

- Grant Writing
- Stream Restoration Design
- Wetland Mitigation Site Identification and Design
- Coordination Between Resource Agencies

Project assistance continues in 2010. Expected services in 2010 are grant assistance, liaison between the Borough and DEP, construction oversight/inspection, and general project coordination.

York County TMDL Workgroup

In response to the EPA's requirement that each state prepare a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) as part of the Bay wide TMDL, the CR in York County is facilitating a TMDL Workgroup in York County. The group consists of representatives from all the major sector groups identified by EPA such as farmers, elected officials, township staff, waste water treatment plant operators/managers, urban/suburban, and watershed groups. The group contains approximately 25 members. The objective of the group will be to discuss how reductions to nutrients and sediments can be made in York County. This information will be relayed back to the State for their use in drafting their WIP to EPA. The CR will be coordinating the group meetings, facilitating discussion, and acting in a general support role.

Grant Writing/Assistance

The CR wrote seven grants on behalf of local governments and watershed groups throughout the county. At least six of the grants were awarded and the total amount of money obtained for York County exceeds \$1,000,000. The projects the grants will fund range from stream & floodplain restoration to urban stormwater retrofits. All projects will reduce nutrients and sediments from entering local waters and the Chesapeake Bay.



Barshinger Creek – York Township

Barshinger Creek is a medium sized watershed which largely lies in York Township and has been identified in both the Codorus Creek Rivers Conservation Plan and the Codorus Creek Watershed Implementation Plan as being impaired. The Codorus Creek Watershed Association applied to the Department of Environmental Protection for a Watershed Renaissance Initiative Grant for the restoration of the entire ten square mile watershed.

The headwaters of Barshinger Creek are also located on the former Red Lion Country Club Property currently owned by the Red Lion Area School District. The CR assisted/lead the following tasks related to Barshinger Creek:

- Assisted with the WRI Grant package and delivered to DEP
- Developed power point presentation for use by CCWA and Gary Peacock
- Met with Dr. Frank Herron, Superintendant RLASD, and staff about former Red Lion Country Club property.
- Met with Sarah Warner and others on several occasions to discuss Project Nature and provide input on design and grant application.
- Met with current tenant of former club house as to intentions with property and advise that work in and around streams and ponds requires the proper state and federal permits. Mr. Briggs is interested in being a partner in the project.
- Coordination with Red Lion Borough.

Riparian Buffer Ordinance

The CR , York County Planning Commission, and the York County Conservation District are working together on riparian buffer ordinance outreach to local governments throughout York County. The CR is coordinating the effort and building the collaborative team. The team approach builds capacity and enhances the capabilities of the individual partners. The objective is to reach out to municipalities to encourage and assist them in establishing a riparian buffer ordinance.



Flooding – North Codorus Township

In July 2009, South Branch Codorus Creek experienced a significant flood which damaged several roads in North Codorus Township. Mr. Mark Derr, township manager, requested assistance from the CR in managing a potential project/funding with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District. The Army Corps has a program that can assist local governments with flooding problems by conducting detailed flood studies that identifies problem areas and recommendations to alleviate flooding in the future. Mr. Derr became involved in other business at the township and did not have capacity to follow-up with the ACE. The CR stepped in and offered free assistance to “quarterback” the project on behalf of the township. The CR coordinated the development of a scope of services and provided necessary data to the ACE for their use in developing a project cost estimate. The CR also coordinated the project between the ACE, North Codorus Township, local/county agencies, and U.S. Congressman Todd Platt’s office.



Flooding on Spangler Road, South Branch Codorus Creek, North Codorus Township.





Local Government and Landowner Workshops

In partnership with the Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County, the CR developed a series of workshops aimed at local elected officials and landowners. The objective was, and is, to provide the tools necessary to local governments that will enable them to implement Bay restoration strategies within their jurisdictions. As of this printing, the Municipal Education Series has concluded. A total of about 120 different people attended. Many of whom attended more than one workshop. The landowner workshops are planned for the end of May, early June 2010 and are poised to be just as, if not more, successful than the Municipal Education Series. The CR helped coordinate the guest speakers, gave a short presentation at each workshop, managed logistics (food, room/hall reservations, etc.), and was the guest instructor at several workshops. Topics for each series of workshops are included below.

Municipal Education Series:

- Environmental Advisory Councils
- Transferable Development Rights
- Impaired Waters & Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)
- Stream BMPs
- Native Plants – Landscaping Regulations
- Growing Greener—Conservation By Design
- Ag Zoning – 12 Steps to Success
- Sustainable Forestry
- Open Space Community Investment

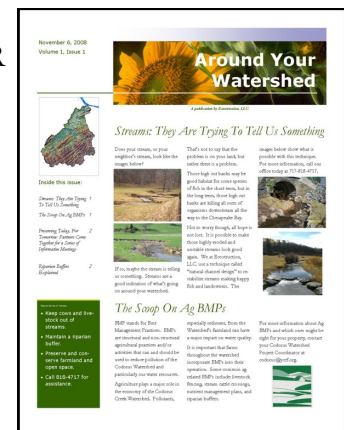
Landowner Workshops:

- Native Plants and Landscaping
- Stream Best Management Practices for the Landowner
- Clean & Green, CREP, and Ag Security Areas
- Forests in Your Backyard
- Rain Barrels and Rain Gardens
- A Beautiful Lawn the Natural Way—Phosphorus and Nitrogen Free Suburbia



Communication and Outreach

Successful engagement of local governments and stakeholders must incorporate a strong communication and outreach campaign. The CR gave presentations to the Lycoming County Planning Commission & Conservation District, the Lancaster County Community Foundation, Lancaster County Planning Commission and Live Green Lancaster about the advantages and benefits of circuit riders. The CR also developed a newsletter that serves to educate elected officials and local stakeholders on various Best Management Practices appropriate throughout the county. The CR also hosted a booth at the Keystone Farm Show which was followed by an article in the York Farm Bureau newsletter. The objective was to reach out to local farmers as well as local elected officials and other stakeholders.



Logos Academy/Foundry Plaza, Inc.



Logos Academy is a local multicultural Classical school which provides a rigorous Christian centered education to the urban youth of York, PA. The school has just begun the construction of a new school building on the banks of the Codorus Creek in the City of York. The location ties in directly with the Codorus Corridor master plan that is under various stages of implementation. A portion of the project will be to restore the banks of the Codorus Creek and create a park like setting where once vacant industry buildings stood. Logos

Academy and Foundry Plaza, Inc., a local non-profit, requested assistance from the CR in grant writing, grant administration, and project coordination for those portions of the project which rehabilitate the banks of the Codorus Creek.



Floodplain Restoration— Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

In May 2009 the NRCS announced an floodplain restoration program that would benefit landowners with significant floodplain issues and in particular farmers. NRCS would pay 100% of the restoration costs of the floodplain area in exchange for a conservation easement on the floodplain area, thus ensuring that floodplain areas would remain open space. Unfortunately, the program had a two week turn around where landowners would need to be identified, a site visit conducted by NRCS, and the proper forms be completed by cooperating landowners. The two week deadline created a bottleneck between NRCS and potential cooperating landowners. The local office also would not have been able to contact landowners about the opportunity, nor would they have the time to complete the paperwork and conduct site visits.

The CR was able to increase capacity at the local level by working with the local NRCS office to identify potential landowners who may benefit from the program. The CR provided the following services to NRCS and local landowners:



- Identification of eight willing landowners.
- Escort the local NRCS office manager on tour of eight sites.
- Assist landowners and NRCS office with completion of required applications and paperwork.



Tyler Run—Innovative Stormwater Management

Tyler Run is a medium size urban tributary which has been identified in the Codorus Creek River Conservation Plan (RCP), Codorus Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), and the West Branch/Mainstem Codorus Creek Watershed Assessment as being severely impaired for much of it's length. The largest source of impairment is stormwater runoff from urbanization. In addition, the lower reaches of Tyler Run traverse an industrial area. As a result, this reach also suffers from neglect.

York College has recently acquired the majority of the property between its main campus and the Codorus Creek. The College has long term visions of this area as the Tyler Run Greenway connecting the Codorus Creek Corridor in York and the Heritage Rail Trail County Park with the main campus via pedestrian/multi-use trails in the Greenway. In addition to connecting pedestrians with the campus, the College also wants to connect pedestrians and students to their Tyler Run. The CR provided the following services to the City of York, Watershed Alliance of York, and York College:

- Project identification, scoping, and conceptual design.
- Preparation of grant which was funded.
- Grant administration.
- Organization of stream clean-ups to get local students and residents interested in the project.
- Project & partner coordination.

The project has been funded and design and construction will begin summer 2010.





Results & Summary: What Worked, What Didn't

Based on testimonials, the requests for assistance, and the fact that the need exceeds the available hours of the CR, the program was a resounding **success**. Our municipal partners are now engaged. **The CR worked directly with eight municipalities within a year and over 40 local landowners including farmers.**

However, there were complications with the project. Early on many local agencies and organizations weren't sure of what the CR was regardless of the information provided. As a result, there were some cases of "turf wars". **Several agencies felt as though the CR program was trying to replace the services they offer.**

After several meetings and working together on projects, those agencies now recognize that the CR is a valuable resource to them. The CR program is a collaborative approach whereby we can build capacity between all the partners for the common goal. The concept of a CR based on the York County model has relevance across Pennsylvania and possibly in other states. Municipalities and other stakeholders have the desire and know they need to do something, but often feel overwhelmed and are unsure how to get started. Many local governments simply don't have the financial resources to hire someone to do what the CR program provides. The CR is one solution to some of these problems. The achievements of the CR Pilot Project in York County are:

- Request for assistance by **40 landowners**. Some of which have been met with and received assistance.
- Seven grants written with an average success rate of 85%. **Over \$1,000,000.00 awarded.**
- **Eight municipalities engaged** (not including workshop attendees) and three watershed organizations.
- On-the-ground reductions of sediments and nutrients. Over **1,051,875 lbs of sediment** have been, or will be, reduced from entering local waters and the Chesapeake Bay through projects.



Conclusions

After one year of service, the CR model, based on experiences in York County, is:

- Community based person working at the county level.
- Bottoms up approach providing technical assistance to local governments, stakeholders, and non-profits.
- Locally based. The CR is familiar with local communities, politics, and local governments. Is knowledgeable at the local, county, state, and federal levels.
- A catalyst, convener, to bring diverse groups together to get projects on the ground.
- A trusted member of the community, recognizable to landowners and groups, and familiar with local issues including agriculture as well as urban and suburban.
- Knowledgeable of various grants and has the ability to prepare and administer them.
- Capacity builder through the establishment and maintenance of multi-group/multi-agency team building.
- Coordinator of working groups and committees to address various ongoing issues.

The model presented here works very well at the county level in York. This model can , therefore, be replicated throughout Pennsylvania and the logical expansion of the model should be in Lycoming and Lancaster Counties. In Maryland, this model could also work at the county level if the needs were great enough, but is more likely to be most effective at the multi-county or regional level. In Virginia, this model is most likely to be effective at the planning district level where counties are already organized.

Though the program was successful in its first year, there is still a need to continue the pilot project . Many of the initiatives started in 2009 will really begin in 2010.



“I met our Circuit Rider, Jake Romig, a few years back while researching effective ways to reduce erosion and flooding in our borough. Jake's vast knowledge of the South Branch Coderus along with his experience in grant writing became very evident in our correspondence. Glen Rock Borough was recently awarded a 319 Grant through DEP to lay porous pavement in our municipal parking lot and build up our stream bank to alleviate runoff and erosion problems into the adjacent stream which runs through the center of our downtown district. Honestly, without Jake's contribution, Glen Rock would not have received this grant.

Thank you for creating the Circuit Rider Program that provides for Jake's assistance.

Sincerely;

**Lucy Cadwallader
Glen Rock Borough Council”**

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the York County Community Foundation, and our local partners would like to thank the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Program Office for the financial support in creating this valuable model that can be replicated across the Bay watershed. Special thanks go to the Local Government Advisory Committee for their tireless efforts and dedication to find better ways to engage local governments in the Chesapeake Bay region. For more information, contact Jake Romig, York County Circuit Rider, at 717-818-4717 or circuitrider@yccf.org.

