

Public Statement by Citizens of Albemarle
Monday, September 20, 2004

To the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority
At its Public Meeting on Community Water Supply Plan Update
At Monticello High School Auditorium
September 21, 2004

Citizens for Albemarle wishes to submit our public concern on the Community Water Supply Plan and the "Short List Alternatives."

We share concerns about the format and timing of this meeting, as expressed by the League of Woman Voters. We feel the format of the meeting does not allow adequate discussion on the water supply planning issues that are critical to our economic future and sense of well-being. Furthermore, the "Short List of Alternatives" precludes this open discussion.

Citizens for Albemarle is concerned with:

1. The environmental costs of each alternative. In particular, new dam construction, flow controls, raised dam elevations, effects on wetlands, extraction from the James River, etc.
2. The high cost of the alternatives. Who will pay; who should pay? These costs add to the existing RWSA debt that future generations will pay.
3. The rate of growth in the watershed. The plan focuses on satisfying the increasing demand for water. However, growth at the current rate is stripping down the integrity of the watershed's environment, which is critical to water supply, water quality, and controlling the escalating costs -- a race to the bottom.
4. Lack of attention to Integrative Planning. There appears to be no overall coordination across the watershed among agencies to safeguard the source of reservoir water. Each agency has its separate mandate, sources of funding, separate needs and different approaches. Where is the collective action?
5. Alternatives do not provide a long term solution. The above mentioned concerns on environment, costs, rates of growth, lack of watershed protection, and lack of agency coordination or integrative planning all appear contrary to long term reservoir protection and to goals of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The need for Integrative Planning was made in August 31, 2001. The Water Resources Staff of the Dept. of Engineering & Public Works sent a memo to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. The subject was "Issues arising from the Water Supply Study." The Staff identified six problems that emerge without Integrated Resource Planning (IRP), and these are critical to water supply plans. Lack of IRP makes it difficult to:

- (1) link water supply management to development area planning.
- (2) develop integrated demand side policy
- (3) attend to environmental and cultural uses of water
- (4) link surface water and groundwater issues
- (5) link water quantity and quality
- (6) establish a sense of responsibility for comprehensive water management.

The Water Resources Staff has recommended 3 options for IRP

- (1) Seek advice on how to establish IPR
- (2) Create a regional policy body
- (3) Expand RWSA mandate and resources

To our knowledge, none of these recommendations has been considered in the recent water supply study, or in the alternatives for public discussion. Yet these recommendations are critical to the county's Comprehensive Plan, Rural Areas, and economic development

The Rural Area Section of the Comprehensive Plan gives evidence for concern. According to the RA section, "... the importance of forested land as an essential component for the continued protection of the County's water resources cannot be overstated. The most important and obvious source of resilience in the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir Watershed ecosystem is the natural forest..." The *South Fork Rivanna Reservoir and Watershed* report stated that, "Forests produce the cleanest and most reliable flow of water possible." Albemarle forest cover is among the 18,000 acres of forestland being lost each year in Virginia due mostly to urbanization. In the rural areas of Albemarle County between 1993 and 2000, the rate of growth was as high as 2.2%. The annual average rate of growth of 1.49% in the Rural Area is comparable to Development Areas at 1.94%. In absolute terms, the Rural Areas population in 2002 was estimated at 42,731 people occupying 16,994 dwelling units, with commercial zoning districts occupying 274 acres. Furthermore, development right lots within the designated Water Supply Protection areas have been created at higher densities than outside those areas. To protect Albemarle's reservoir and its safe water yield, we must protect our forests and better manage watershed development.

Thus, it is imperative that the Community Water Supply Plan be made consistent with the present Albemarle Comprehensive Plan, and that any revision of the Comp Plan continue to emphasize protecting the watersheds.