

Bluffton Opinion

Put watershed plan into action

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By [Joe Croley](#)

When life is fair someone will change the name of the current May River Watershed Action Plan to the "Let's pay another consultant to tell us what we already know about the river but refuse to implement any Recommendation Plan."

After watching Stephen King's "The Shining" this weekend for perhaps the 50th time I was trying to decide if it is a better horror show than watching the River and its watershed be shut down due to lack of at least trying something different to save it.

At last week's meeting to discuss the latest revision of a plan to save the May River attended by the current consultants and a number of residents interested in saving the river, there were a number of yet to be tried ideas presented, mostly by the folks that actually have seen the River deteriorate over the years thus eyewitnesses to the primary cause, permitted development at any cost.

Some of them such as implementing the Transfer of Development Rights program, TDR, encouraged by the virtually ignored 2-year-old proposal from the Coastal Conservation League or even the idea of no additional permitting be allowed until the health of the watershed improvements were discussed at length by the participants.

The league's study, that I can only assume was stored on the shelf next to the numerous other studies the taxpayers have funded, recommended designating certain areas for concentrated growth because of their location away from the primary drainage passages to the River. The recommendation certainly seemed like a good idea two years ago and still does, however it is not mentioned in the current draft of the new and improved plan to rescue the watershed from certain degradation.

Of course tying permitting to improvement of the watershed implies that dreaded word, moratorium. If and when it comes to deciding whether the health of the watershed trumps the ability to convert dirt to asphalt in the name of development my money goes to development being brought forward and worrying about the river tomorrow as Scarlett O'Hara would say.

Tired old ideas, like rain barrels, more detention ponds and blaming all of the problems on wildlife is not going to improve anything, it just hopefully will not get worse.

What is needed is for our elected officials to take decisive action on new and different ideas such as implementing and enforcing TDR's, daring to try something different, with risk normally comes reward. However, with no enforcement there will be no improvement.

Since a majority of Town Council will be sworn in next year perhaps the oath of office should include a phrase such as 'if the health of the watershed does not improve during my term I solemnly swear I will not run for re-election.'

In the meantime, you can contact Joe Croley at Whenlifeisfair@gmail.com.