

Implementation Priorities



May River Waterbody Management Plan

Implementation Priorities

The purpose of the Waterbody Management Plan for the May River is to attempt to address the impacts of competing uses on the waterbody over the next five years. Through the efforts of the Project Advisory Committee and the Project Team, a review of the analysis of Issues, Conflicts and Opportunities resulted in the identification of eleven actions and focus areas that would most likely advance the project goals and objectives and should be attempted first. These Implementation Priorities are designed to advance multiple goals and objective at the same time. The eleven actions are intended to be implemented programmatically, calling on the resources from various agencies and organizations identified as part of the Inventory and Analysis phases. Consistency and clarity in rules, regulations and policies that manage activities along the River is a recurring element to the Implementation Priorities. The most noticeable aspect is the clear necessity for the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County to collaborate and work jointly on many of the initiatives.

The Implementation Priorities listed in this section include an Issue Background, specific Recommendations, Actions Required for Implementation, Responsible Parties, and Possible Funding Sources. The Priorities are designed to facilitate immediate implementation by identifying the “who, what, why and how” for recommendation. In addition, the Priorities are also designed to enable appropriate parties, such as the Town or County governments, to respond quickly to grant and other funding or scientific research opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, the Priorities are designed to provide a list of recommended, specific actions that can be expected to provide the most benefit to the protection of the uses of the May River over the next five years.

1. Establish an Implementation Committee comprised of members of the Project Advisory Committee tasked with ensuring coordination and implementation of the May River Waterbody Management Plan.

Issue Background

The Waterbody Management Plan is intended to identify actions to implement for the next five years in the May River. Successful implementation of any plan requires focus, continuity and commitment from a host of parties. In establishing the Project Advisory Committee for the development of the Waterbody Management Plan for the May River, the Town Council has demonstrated its commitment to inventory, assess, and study the River and its myriad uses. Continued commitment will be necessary to take the recommended actions further through to fruition. Involvement of various interest groups, local and regional experts, and stakeholders will be crucial to success.

Most of the members of the Project Advisory Committee are also members of other State, County, and Town committees and organizations, and the knowledge of what other groups are doing was extremely beneficial. Although all are busy, most of the Project

May River Waterbody Management Plan

8. Accelerate land acquisition and preservation along the May River, particularly in the headwaters section, at the county and town levels.

Issue Background

Analysis performed as part of the development of the Waterbody Management Plan indicated that the headwaters section of the River, coupled with the various tidal creeks, presented the most sensitive ecological conditions in the system. Although some hypoxic conditions may occur naturally during the summer season, significant overland flow into these areas may provide an avenue for future increased nutrient deposition should significant development occur. Acquisition, both fee simple and through conservation and other easement mechanisms, may prove to be the most effective methods of protecting water quality in the headwaters area, and ultimately the rest of the River.

Acquisition is an expensive and time-consuming, yet highly effective means of protecting surface water quality, particularly if undertaken in the appropriate locations. Establishing a clear and focused approach to acquisition is vital to its success. Due to the high potential for overland flow in many areas of the headwaters section, focusing acquisition or conservation easements in the headwaters, coupled with limited development and carefully managed stormwater controls, may provide the most effective land use control for water quality protection.

Recommendations

- Create a priority acquisition list and target land acquisition activities by the County Rural and Critical Lands Program, Town, and other groups.
- Create a priority easement list and coordinate with County Rural and Critical Lands Program, Town, and other groups to secure conservation easements, particularly within the headwaters and other sensitive habitats along the River.
- Use the Waterbody Management Implementation Committee to prepare a map of acquisition and preservation priorities.

Actions Required for Implementation

The Implementation Committee should coordinate the development of a priority acquisition list for natural resource and water quality conservation for both fee simple acquisition and conservation easements.

The Committee should prepare a map for these identified parcels and present the findings, along with justification for inclusion, to the Town Council and County Council.

Acquisition of fee simple or conservation easements should begin, particularly in the headwaters section of the River as a priority.

Responsible Parties

Town of Bluffton (lead) and Beaufort County Critical and Rural Lands Program. Local resident and Homeowner Association participation in agreeing to Riverfront easements.

May River Waterbody Management Plan

Possible Funding Sources

County Critical and Rural Lands Program may be capable of providing some funding and technical assistance for the acquisition of waterfront easements or parcels for public access.

The Town may consider establishing a fund with the purpose of acquiring Riverfront properties and conservation easements.

9. Prepare a boating management plan for the May River.

Issue Background

As the population of Bluffton and the surrounding communities grows, the number of boats using the water will increase. This projected increase is also expected to result in an increase in conflicts on the May River between vessel users, natural resources, and upland property owners. In some areas of the May River, particularly around the Town Dock and further up the River, the waterway becomes narrow and undulating. Congestion in areas like these can result in dangerous boating conditions and challenges to public safety. In addition, the current estimates of boating use on the May River are inadequate for future planning to be locally effective and additional information is necessary.

The immediate boating situation on the May River is generally at an acceptable level, and accidents are rarely reported. There is not a pressing, urgent need for the development of a boating management plan. This is, however, an excellent time to begin the preparation and data collection in anticipation of the projected population increase over the next five years. Data from boating surveys should be collected throughout the River to provide decision-makers with the best available information. Anticipation of future issues, such as congestion at boat landings, managing vessel moorings, and managing vessel waste discharge, should be discussed in the boating management plan.

Recommendations

- Coordinate with DHEC-OCRM, USCG, DNR, Friends of the Rivers and the Waterbody Management Implementation Committee to prepare the boating management plan.
- Perform a survey of boating use in the May River using standard, replicable survey techniques for inclusion in the boating management plan.
- Utilize the boating management plan outline prepared for Beaufort County, and incorporate the boating management plan into the Waterbody Management Plan when completed.

Actions Required for Implementation

A survey of boat and landing users in the May River, including embarkation point, length of trip and purpose of trip, should be prepared and administered to create an accurate estimate of boating use within the May River. This survey should be repeated annually to determine boating trends.