

Down the Pipeline

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BAY BAROMETER: BAY HEALTH CONTINUES TO IMPROVE

In January, the Chesapeake Bay Program released its 2016-17 Bay Barometer: Health and Restoration in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This annual report on bay health shows marked improvements from 2016 to 2017 in underwater grasses, blue crab abundance, fish passage, pollution reduction and water quality. In fact, water quality standards are the highest achieved since restoration efforts began, with 40 percent of the bay and its tributaries reaching their goals. Several of the Bay health measures saw improvements, including:

- A decrease in nutrient and sediment loads;
- An increase in attainment of water standards;
- An increase in the acres of underwater grasses; and
- An increase in the blue crab population

Of most interest, the report shows that between October 2015 and September 2016 about 241 million pounds of nitrogen, 13.6 million pounds of phosphorus and 2.5 million pounds of sediment reached the Bay. Computer simulations

show that pollution controls put in place between 2009 and 2016 lowered nitrogen loads 9%, phosphorus loads 20%, and sediment loads 9%. Experts attribute the reduction in nitrogen loads to technological upgrades at wastewater treatment plants and agricultural Best Management Practices.



Nutrient Regulation Update

Legislation to help mitigate the anticipated severe statewide impacts on localities and wastewater authorities of EPA's 2013 water quality criteria for ammonia is making its way through the General Assembly. At this time no other state in the mid-Atlantic region has adopted these new regulations.

There are two bills that seek

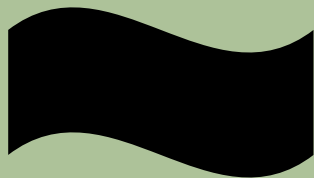
to establish a long-term phased implementation program consistent with the Clean Water Act to reasonably plan, finance, and construct any necessary treatment upgrades. These bills also prohibit the State Water Control Board from adopting new ammonia criteria without a phased implementation approach, including consideration

of the relative priority of ammonia criteria and water infrastructure needs of the community.

The apparent adoption timeframe for ammonia appears to project out for final Executive Review and Region 3 review in late 2019. The likely effective date for permitting purposes here in Virginia appears to be late 2019-2020.

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Industrial Pretreatment
Wastewater Treatment

Business Tagline or Motto

The Industrial Pretreatment Program's purpose is to ensure that all promulgated regulations at both the State and Federal levels will be consistently applied to industrial users at the local level. Therefore, local control mechanisms in the form of Discharge Permits are issued in order that all Prohibited Discharges as well as Local Limitations can be enforced and controlled. The Program exists to protect the wastewater treatment plant and the entire collection system, its workers, the quality of the water and living organisms in the receiving stream, and the people downstream of the Central wastewater treatment plant in Bedford.



PCB Total Maximum Daily Loads Being Developed

DEQ continues to develop PCB TMDLs for numerous rivers here in Virginia.

TMDLs continue to be developed for the New River. There has been concern that these will produce unusually low standards for a pollutant that is also present in the atmosphere.

DEQ is also working on TMDLs for the tidal James and Elizabeth Rivers. Delays are being experienced due to complexities at the Hampton Roads federal military facilities' discharge.

DEQ has a study in place for the Upper James River PCB TMDL. This will include the Maury, Hardware, Slate, Jackson, and other tributary rivers and streams.

The Bluestone River TMDL

effort is proceeding slowly because of department resource issues. Difficulties are present here due to very high concentrations of PCBs coming from a West Virginia tributary that flows to the Virginia waters.

Mountain Run, a tributary to the Rappahannock River in Culpepper County has data collection ongoing.

DEQ has continued its implementation efforts with the completed PCB TMDLs in other parts of Virginia. In the Roanoke River watershed five Pollutant Minimization Plans (PMP) have been triggered, and in the Bluestone a PMP was triggered for one POTW for a prior TMDL.

It must be noted that DEQ does not have the authority to require a Permittee generate PCB lab data with EPA's non-Part 136 Method 1668. EPA requires that all compliance sampling and analysis only be done using EPA approved methodologies listed in Part 136 of the Clean Water Act.

On a final note, DEQ has for some time offered a PMP technical resource guide that may be of value to anyone conducting sample and analysis for PCBs. It also provides guidance on locating and identifying possible sources of PCBs.

In the majority of cases, the presence of PCBs is from a legacy site where these compounds had been stored or improperly disposed of.